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UNCLE SAM'S BABIES.

UNCLE SAM'S BABIES

Stories

BY

M. G. BONESTEEL

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DEDICATED

TO MY HUSBAND

C. H. B.

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OLAF'S CHRISTMAS GIFT;

OR,

THE CHRIST-CHILD'S MESSENGERS.

IT was a broiling July Fourth that the "double quartet" from Fort Barry visited the near-by Sioux Indian Agency and spent a day and night there. The Indians had a big pow-wow and dance, at which unlimited beef and dog-stew were consumed, and an equal amount of tall stories and brag indulged in by the ex-warriors; all of which was intensely interesting to the boys, four in number, James Harold, known always as Jimmy; Francis Parker, Edward Smith, and the "Kid," a lively irrepressible of six years, the youngest hopeful in the Smith family, Dickey by name. But the girls, "the fairer half of the quartet," as Frank Parker sentimentally called them, were most interested in the Indian Girls' School, or orphanage really, and spent their time there, for most of the thirty inmates were either orphans or practically deserted.

It was delightful to have Mattie Crazy-Eye get up, make her bow, and recite glibly enough "A Soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers"; it was funny, too, and the girls had hard work to keep their faces quite straight; still not for worlds would they have hurt the feeling of the gentle sisters and their bright young charges.

Elinor Smith who stood in the often time trying position of responsible elder sister to the "Kid," was brimful of tact, and she it was who discovered how very clever the Indian girls were with their needles.

Elizabeth Stone, Betty for short, the "Tomboy," discovered the babies, and took the queer little brown orphans to her heart at once; they ranged from one to six years, and were as good as they were cunning.

"The dear, patient, little mites," cried Betty, "they haven't a single decent plaything; "girls, we *must* do something for them," continued warm-hearted Betty.

"Yes, we must," echoed Fanny and Ellen Brent, who always followed Miss Betty's lead.

The pretty young sister who was showing the girls through the building, smiled and looked pleasant.

"It would be exceedingly kind of you to remember our little ones, young ladies. Why not send them a Christmas box? Last year we had nothing for them but some candy, apples, and a few bright-colored holy pictures, and yet the poor things were as delighted as could be."

"A splendid idea, sister," the four girls exclaimed

warmly; "we will send them a fine box at Christmas. Just give us a list of names and ages, so we'll know how to suit our gifts to the children."

"In the meantime, sister, I have a little pocket-money with me; do get the babies some toys and books to play with now, Christmas is such a long time to wait," said Elinor, the provident, who was never known to have an empty pocketbook, whilst the other girls smiled ruefully. They never had a penny a week after pay-day.

And Elinor was not a bit stingy either, no one so ready to lend as she; "but Elinor manages somehow," the girls would say.

But Elinor's explanation differed a little. "It's all St. Joseph and a little self-denial, girls; I always carry this dear little St. Joseph in my pocketbook; mother brought it to me from Vienna, and then I say a tiny prayer to that dear saint, that I may just always have enough to give a little, and that's all there is to it."

"Elinor, you are such a CATHOLIC Catholic!" exclaimed heedless Betty, "now why should St. Joseph give you a full pocketbook?"

Fanny and Elinor were not Catholics, so they too listened eagerly to Elinor's little explanation.

"Well, you see, girls, it's just this way," began Elinor, earnestly, her sweet face flushing a little; she found it difficult to speak of her small acts of devotion. "St. Joseph had to WORK to support our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, and they were poor as we know, so

poor St. Joseph most probably had money-troubles like most of us poor mortals, and it is a quaint old Catholic tradition that if one carries a small image of the saint, and will say a prayer for that intention, good St. Joseph will see that one's purse is never quite empty."

All the way home the next day the boys and girls discussed the "Christmas box" with the officers and ladies who had accompanied them on their outing, and the grown people promised to aid them in every possible way.

And Miché, the French half-breed teamster, who drove the "gray mule-team" ambulance, smiled approval on the young people as he listened to their kindly plans for his little Indian brothers and sisters, as he mentally termed them, and then and there he planned a fine hunt, a real deer hunt for the boys, as the best he could do to reward them for their good hearts.

Miché was quite a character, every one in the garrison liked the lad and had a kindly word for him; he was a protégé of Père Jolet's, and served mass always on the good priest's monthly visit to the post.

He had been the mail-carrier for a year or so, a dangerous task in winter, when the wide Missouri was frozen over in huge blocks of ice, with fifty miles of mountain road to travel to the nearest railway station, often with the thermometer at 30 degrees below zero, and the fear of a blizzard blowing up at any time.

No one envied the lad his job, and the boys, his great

friends and ardent admirers, were very pleased when the quartermaster gave him the position of teamster.

And Miché actually drove "the gray mule-team," behind which, before Miché tamed them, no post lady would risk her life; "he actually drove them gray devils without swearing at 'em," so the other teamsters exclaimed in wondering amazement.

He not only drove them without swearing at them, but by his loving kindness so conquered their obstinate mule hearts, that they became as gentle as lambs, and answered to their names like tame cats. Now, all these persons, animals, and things, are important, for they all had their share in bringing Olaf his Christmas gift.

The visit to the Indian Agency.

The little Indian children.

The girls and boys of Fort Barry.

The gray mule team, and, finally, last but by no means least Miché, the Indian teamster.

II.

No real work was done about the Indian Christmas box until "Hallow'een."

The quartet were having a gay little party at Betty Stone's. Their governess, whom all the eight boys and girls shared, had given them a holiday for "All Saints," so that the party had received permission to keep up until ten o'clock, a rare concession and a great treat.

It was after they were quite tired out with bobbing

for apples in a tub of water, burning chestnuts, and melting lead, in which pursuit Dickey had burned not only his fingers but a hole in his best trousers, and had howled so dismally that the sentry walking past on No. 2, right in rear of the officers' quarters, had stopped and rapped at the kitchen door to find out what could be the matter.

To soothe poor Dick's wounded feelings and create a diversion, Frank suddenly asked:

"What have you girls done about that Christmas box for those Indian young ones?"

"Not a thing, I'm ashamed to say," replied Elinor penitently, "but we have been so busy since school began, there hasn't been much time; Ned was speaking of it at breakfast this morning."

"I have tried my best," said Betty, "to save a little, but oh, dear! where the money goes, I can't imagine; I've got just two dollars to contribute."

"Well, Betty, that's a good deal for you," remarked Frank, teasingly; "if a girl I know wasn't so fond of canteen soda water and candy, the poor Indian's youngster would fare better."

"Never mind him, Betty," said Elinor, "soda water days are over now, and the canteen candy isn't good anyway, so you will be able to do better."

"I tell you, boys and girls, let's each write on a slip of paper what we can give, and Frank, being our prize mathematician, can sum it up, then we'll know how much money we have got to earn before Christmas."

"I've got forty cents and a Canadian half-a-cent," shouted Dickey, "but I am only going to give half, because I've got other people to buy Christmas presents for, and I don't like 'Injun' children very well anyhow, they're awful dirty, most always."

"Not half as dirty as some little white boys I know," answered Elinor, severely, in her elder-sister manner.

"Yes, I know," replied Master Dick, serenely, "Micky Ryan and those; yes, they are pretty dirty."

They all laughed at Dick's calm ignoring of his sister's intended rebuke.

"We are wandering from our subject," said Jimmy, "come on now, Frank, with your figures, how much cash have we to buy useful and ornamental gifts for the wily savage."

"Twelve dollars and sixty cents," answered Frank, "not a bad showing, still we ought to have more."

"Let's have a play," suddenly exclaimed Betty, "and charge twenty-five cents admission; mamma has some splendid ones written for children; she played in them at the Convent; one especially would be fine, it is a Colonial play, and the plot is that the only son of the Governor of Massachusetts, a little fellow of five or six (that's *you*, Dickey), is stolen as an act of revenge by the order of an Indian chief, Powhasset. I know the play almost by heart, I've read it so often.

"The child is finally rescued through the efforts of a dark-haired Indian maid (that's Elinor, for she's a brunette) and a Jesuit priest, who is trying to convert

the tribe, and has succeeded with the chief's lovely daughter, Waketa, otherwise Elinor.

"The chief has a wicked son who is the villain of the play; you could take the part beautifully, Frank."

"Oh, thank you," interrupted Frank, sarcastically.

"It's a splendid idea, Betty," chorused Fanny and Ellen as usual; "but," said Fanny, "how could they act such a play at a Convent, Betty, where there are no boys?"

"Oh, easy enough," answered Betty.

"The big girls took the parts; they wore boots, long capes, and slouch hats, to represent the white men; a few feathers, blankets, and moccasins made good Indian costumes. Anyway, mamma went to the Sacred Heart, near Montreal, and it was easy enough to get up the Indian parts there."

"Well, Betty, I think the play is the best idea yet," said Jimmy, emphatically; "if your mother will only help us we can make a success of it, I know."

"I think so too," agreed Frank, "even if I have to play the villain; I can borrow a fine costume from Miché anyway."

"Make out your cast, Betty, and let us see how many and what kind of parts there are," said Elinor.

"Just eight," answered Betty.

The Governor's wife, that's me, with powdered hair *à la* Martha Washington, patches, and a court train, my part is principally clothes, I don't have much to say.

"Hard on you, Lady Betty, you're best at talking," murmured Frank, wickedly.

"A lady's maid and a careless nurse," continued Betty, ignoring Frank's remark; "they will do for you, Fanny and Ellen. Then dark-haired Elinor will be our star actress, the lovely Indian maid who rescues the stolen child."

Now for the boys.

"Dickey, of course, is the stolen child, Frank the villain. Jimmy, you're really too lively and full of pranks for the priest; but you'll have to reform and act the part because you're tall and thin, and will make up fine."

"Too lively! I like that, from YOU in particular, Betty, I mean to be a Jesuit anyway when I grow up, so there!"

"Ned, you'll have to be the sheriff, or beadle or village watchman, or whatever they called the town policeman a hundred years ago. You call, 'Lost child, lost child.' I am sure mamma will help us through, act as prompter and stage-manager, if necessary."

"We'll begin to-morrow and copy our parts, and have our first rehearsal at our house Saturday afternoon," finished Betty, and all the rest agreed to this.

Mrs. Stone readily agreed to aid the children in every possible way, and all the mothers thought the play an excellent idea.

It would give the children amusement and employment enough to keep them busy out of school-hours; a difficult task often, for many amusements were not possible in the small isolated frontier garrison; besides it would really give them enough money of their own

earnings to make their Christmas gift a successful one.

A busy four weeks of rehearsing, planning, and making costumes and scenery ensued, and at last the eventful evening arrived.

There was a very good little stage with some scenery, a drop curtain, and quartermaster footlights at one end of the "Post Amusement Room."

Mrs. Stone as stage-manager, with the boys as assistants, had done wonders with her stage setting.

Two hundred and fifty tickets had been sold, and as the officers had insisted upon paying extra for reserved seats, though one seat was as good as another, Frank, as treasurer, had seventy-five dollars in his battered old pocketbook, which he had carefully locked in his father's desk in the sitting-room; not the safest place in the world to keep valuables, for the desk was old and rickety having traveled pretty well over the continent, and it stood between the side windows which opened on the stage road where there was no sentry. But no one ever dreamed of burglars in an Army Post, fifty miles at least from any possible visits from tramps.

So Frank went happily off to the little theater, not giving a single thought to his trust funds.

Miché had loaned him a fine Sioux war costume, a war bonnet with eagles' feathers, a beautiful bow and arrow, and was to assist him make up for his part of the Indian villain.

The costume was, of course, historically not correct,

for Massachusetts Indians probably dressed very differently from their western Sioux brethren; still there was no one to criticise.

As Mrs. Stone surveyed her company of youthful actors and actresses, she felt very well satisfied with her efforts.

Blushing, dimpled Betty made a very stately little Governor's lady.

Fanny and Ellen, in their neat maid-costumes of a hundred years ago, looked quaint and pretty.

While Elinor made a lovely Indian maid, little Dick was as cunning as possible in his old-fashioned, long-tailed coat and queer cut trousers; he couldn't believe boys really wore such funny-looking clothes a hundred years ago.

Jimmy made a very sedate-looking missionary; he had borrowed Père Jolet's best cassock and was capitally made up. The others in the cast were equally good.

As the curtain was rung up, there was a low hum of admiration from the audience. Betty, as the Governor's wife, was discovered playing battledoor and shuttlecock in the garden with her little son.

Acts first and second passed off splendidly, the young people playing their parts with grace and spirit.

In the last act, Frank had a dramatic scene with Elinor, in which he tries to kill the stolen child with his keen hunting-knife; at the last moment he discovered that he had forgotten his knife, which Miché had supplied with the balance of his costume.

It was only a step to Captain Parker's quarters, so Miché volunteered to run and get it. The orchestra played an extra piece, then another, and still Miché did not return.

Then Mrs. Stone decided they must go on with the play, and Frank would have to shoot at the child instead of stabbing him.

Frank was greatly disappointed, for he had counted a good deal on the fine effect his gorgeous hunting-knife would produce, still there was no help for it; but he wondered what could be keeping Miché.

The play went smoothly on to the end. Just as the curtain was descending upon the final tableaux, three loud rifle shots rang out, and the sentry on number one at the guard-house was heard calling for the sergeant of the guard.

Instantly the crowded hall was in confusion, something serious had evidently happened, and everybody made a rush for the doors at the same time; the officer of the guard succeeded in getting out and started on a run across the parade ground in the direction of Captain Parker's quarters, towards which the guard were running in response to loud calls for help! help!

The boys were wildly excited, they dashed off the stage just as they were, and ran to the scene of the trouble.

A glance showed Frank what was the matter; beneath the sitting-room window, with its contents scattered far and near on the frost-covered ground,

lay his old pocketbook, while four members of the guard were handcuffing a tall, powerfully built ruffian, who was swearing horribly. The post doctor was attending to poor Miché, who was bleeding profusely from a bad scalp wound, made by the very knife he had come in search of.

Miché soon told his story; he had come upon the thief, a dishonorably discharged soldier of Captain Parker's company, just as he was getting out of the window; the two had struggled to gain possession of the pocketbook, but Miché had managed to give the alarm, and held on to his assailant until the sentry had come running up. In his violent anger at being caught, the man had snatched up the knife which was lying on a table near by, and made a savage lunge at the young half-breed. Fortunately he had not aimed well, and the cut was not a serious matter.

It was a very exciting ending to their play, and gave the young people a topic of conversation the entire winter.

Frank said he had quite enough of trust funds, and turned his money over to the quartermaster to be locked up in the safe.

III.

The young people after careful discussion with their elders decided to spend only twenty-five dollars out

of their earnings, the balance they would send the sisters, to be used as they thought best.

With this money they sent off a big order to Sioux City, and when the huge box arrived, how the girls worked! There were dolls to dress, little gowns and aprons to be made, pretty little work-baskets to fit up; pretty ties and bright-colored ribbons to sort out and mark.

Miché was to take the box on the day before Christmas; he had obtained permission to spend the holidays at his own home, which was near the agency.

* * * * * *

On the twentieth Miché's hunting-party, planned early in the summer, left the post bright and early for a three days' hunt.

Mr. Howell, the second lieutenant of Captain Parker's company, with a detail of ten men, was in charge of the party, but the three boys looked upon Miché as the real head.

The young half-breed had been in earnest consultation with his Indian friends and relatives for many days before they started, so he had the best and latest information as to where the ducks were thickest, and where an occasional bear prowled in search of food, and antelopes were almost certain to be had.

Dickey and the girls got up at reveille to see the start.

Miché drove his gray mules in the big, yellow Dougherty wagon, the foot of which contained a big hamper of provisions and extra wraps.

Behind this came a big, blue escort wagon, with the ten men, the tents, rations, blankets, and other necessaries for a camp.

"Be sure and be back by the twenty-third," called Betty; "remember, Miché, you're to take the box for us in time for Christmas, don't get lost!"

Miché smiled gravely; Indian like, he talked very little.

"Good-by, good-by, and good luck!" called the girls, and the boys in the ambulance waved a farewell as they turned the corner by the adjutant's office, and dashed off on the old stage road which lead out over the divide.

* * * * * *

For two days a furious blizzard had been blowing, the snow had drifted so that the lonely little "dug-out" of Jansen, the Norwegian settler, was almost covered. One window and the door they had managed to keep cleared, and a path which led to the rude shacks close by, wherein their precious stock was sheltered.

It was Christmas Eve, and Jansen with his little son Olaf were talking in front of the glowing stove.

"This is like a storm in the old country, Olaf. It would be hard work to go to the Midnight Mass, a night like this, and yet no man would miss it, but the women and children would not venture out."

"Yes, my father, I would if only I were there; I can not remember much of my own country, my father," replied the little lad wistfully.

"Thou wert too young when we left, Olaf, and thou hast been blind so long, thou hast forgotten. Can'st thou recall thy dear mother, my son?"

"Oh, yes, when I close my eyes tight."

The father smiled at the child's fancy; were not the poor blind eyes always closed?

"She smiles at me, she looks like the Mother Mary you have told me of, in the old church at home."

"It is a sad and lonely life for a child," murmured the father; but little Olaf heard it, for he answered cheerily:

"Not so, while I have my friend for company," touching, as he spoke, a quaint, very ancient-looking violin.

"A poor Christmas for thee, my Olaf, not even one gift have I for thee save the Christmas cake, and that is made without plums."

"Do not trouble, father mine, I am content; but if only the beautiful Christ-child would come and knock at our door this night, and say to me that I might have any one gift I chose, I know what I would say."

"If thou had'st just *one* gift, how would'st thou choose?" asked his father.

"Oh, quite easy, for I would ask for enough gold so that thou, my father, would'st not have to work so hard; and thou, father, what gift would'st thou choose?"

"Light, my Olaf, light for thy poor darkened eyes," catching the little lad to his heart.

"Well, my father, when I pray to-night, I shall ask of

our Christ-child these two gifts; and to-night, when we have our little feast, I will sing the Christ-child hymns and we will keep our Christmas *so*."

"Three o'clock!" suddenly spoke Jansen, "and nearly dark. I must attend to our dumb friends, my son," and he proceeded to bundle up in a huge fur coat and light his lantern, for the darkness was growing deeper every moment.

Pausing outside the door, Jansen swept the horizon with his quick, keen glance, then suddenly he uttered an exclamation. A big, black object, a half-mile down the cañon, caught his eye. It moved slowly, then stopped, and though Jansen waited some time, it did move again.

"Something or somebody caught out in the storm!" he exclaimed; "well, I must see to it;" and hastily explaining to Olaf, the sturdy Norwegian set out.

* * * * * *

A half-hour later the belated hunting-party were safely installed in the small "dugout," "trying to thaw out a two days' freeze," as Frank expressed it.

They were not exactly lost, an Indian never gets lost, but they had been forced to abandon the big escort wagon on account of the heavy drifts, and the entire party had to depend upon the plucky gray mules to get them home. Taking turns at riding and walking, they had struggled on somehow; but for several hours Miché had had hard work to urge his mules on, only his loving coaxing and urging would have accomplished

it, so that the little Jansen "dugout" seemed a very haven of refuge to the weary hunters. After an hour's rest, during which they had refreshed themselves with quantities of hot coffee, they began to wonder if it were not possible to get home that night. Miché reported that they were not over ten miles from the post, and if Jansen would lend them his stout farm horses they would easily manage it.

"I had hoped that our Christmas guests would have spent the happy day with us," exclaimed Olaf, shyly.

"We can't, Olaf," explained the boys, "for our fathers and mothers are already, probably, terribly frightened about us."

"But, Olaf," asked Jimmy, "why can't you come with us and spend Christmas? See, it has stopped snowing and the cold is not so great now. We'll bundle you up carefully and take the best of care of you and your fiddle."

So it was arranged—to Jansen's huge delight.

* * * * * *

The hunting party reached the post, just as the bugles were sounding tattoo, and the entire garrison turned out to welcome them, for they had indeed been very anxious.

* * * * * *

Such a merry, happy Christmas as they had; the only drawback was the utter impossibility of getting the Christmas box to the agency.

Little Olaf had never had so many presents in his

whole life, good things were fairly showered upon him; but the *best* gift of all came in the evening at the beautiful Christmas tree at the Smith's, where Dickey insisted upon sharing all his treasures with the little stranger.

The two little lads were standing by the brilliantly lighted and decorated tree, Dickey describing its beauties to the blind child.

The post surgeon, a gray-haired, kindly bachelor, the devoted friend of all the children, gazed keenly at Olaf's sweet face, then stooping he picked the child up and sat him on his knee, asking a few abrupt questions, and examining with tender, deft touch the poor, blind eyes.

In a moment he looked up.

"The boy can be cured," he said briefly. Olaf understood, with a rapturous cry of joy; the people around him entirely forgotten, he fell on his knees and seizing his violin poured out a hymn of thanksgiving; his way of praying. It was a touching sight and more than one eye was moist; Elinor saw a big tear roll down the Doctor's cheek and splash down on his best blouse unheeded.

The next day came a discussion of ways and means. Jansen had ridden in for the day, and was entirely overcome when he heard the good news. "I will sell all I have," he declared, "so that my boy may be cured."

It was Dickey who suggested using the money left

from the play towards the hospital expenses, for Olaf would have to go east to a great specialist who was an old friend of the Doctor's. The bachelor officers made up a generous purse, and Mr. Holt who was going to New York on leave in a week, volunteered to take the boy with him.

The Christmas box for the Indian children reached the agency late the next day, and Elinor wrote the Sister Superior a detailed account of all these happenings; of how they had meant to send the money for her little charges, and how and why they had changed their minds.

When the sister read the part of Elinor's letter telling of little Olaf to her dusky charges, one of the older Indian girls stepped forward and replied softly: "We thank our white sisters for their good hearts, but we are glad that the money should give new eyes to the little white brother. May the Great Spirit and the Heavenly Mother give him eyes as bright as stars!"

* * * * * *

So Olaf went to the great doctor's hospital, but it was many weary weeks before it was certain that the operation had been successful, but finally one day a telegram reached Fort Barry, telling the good news, and in half an hour, Miché was riding out to Jansen's ranch to tell the lonely man of the happy news.

* * * * * *

All this happened quite a good many years ago. The

garrison at Fort Barry is entirely changed now, and a German family occupy Jansen's ranch.

* * * * * *

A year ago in Berlin, a new violinist made his debut, a tall, fair-haired youth with shining blue eyes. Amongst the audience were several intensely interested spectators.

First a big blond giant, rugged and toil-worn in appearance, who wept like a child at the beautiful music. "Olaf Jansen's father," some one whispered. The second was a group of Americans. "Dickey, you'll pound a hole in the floor," laughed a pretty, golden-haired girl, whom the youth addressed as Betty. "And everyone is looking at us, Dick; do stop," said a dark-eyed, beautiful girl, who sat with wrapt, entranced face, gazing at the young musician.

"Pooh! Elinor, they are gazing at our American beauties. I mean to give Olaf a genuine American send-off, and if you girls don't like it, just pretend I don't belong to your crowd. Every one knows the United States Military Attaché; Ned is staid enough for us all," grinning at his brother, who had recently received this appointment, and which accounted for the presence of the Smith family in Berlin; also, Betty who was to be Mrs. Lieutenant Smith before many months had passed.

The young musician received a perfect ovation, but as soon as he could tear himself away, he was shaking

hands, half weeping and half laughing, with his old friends; the friends who had helped to give him his precious Christmas gifts that dreary Christmas Eve so many years ago.

The Christ-child's messengers, so Olaf had always called them; for father and son had each received the gift he asked for.

CHARLES O'MALLEY.

A FRONTIER TRAGEDY.

PART I.

THE band was just marching across the parade ground for guard mounting, as four serious-looking boys assembled as if by previous arrangement, and seated themselves in comfortable attitudes on the big caissons that stood directly in front of the commanding officer's quarters at Fort Barry.

Jack Lyndon, the Colonel's only son, by virtue of his age and rank, addressed the little group of eager listeners as follows:

"Fellows," he began impressively, "we have got to do something; not a boy in this garrison believes O'Malley guilty of the slightest dishonest act, much less what he is charged with, and there is hardly a soldier here that believes it either. Any one who *knows* O'Malley, knows he would die rather than do such a thing."

"That's so," agreed Tim Larned, "and as my mother says, if he were dishonest it would have come out before this, as he was our mail-carrier for a year, and so has had lots and lots of chances to steal if he wanted to."

"Any one with half an eye can see that O'Malley's a gentleman, and I don't believe O'Malley's his name at all," said Joe Richards, not seeing that masquerading under an assumed name was somewhat incompatible with the idea of a gentleman.

Jack frowned. "Well, Joe, don't go blabbing that opinion around; it won't do O'Malley any good, and what makes you think so anyway?"

"Well, you see, I got a peep at the inside of his watch one day, and what do you think I saw? One of those things—what do you call 'em?—crests. This one was a stag's head, with a Latin motto and the initals B. D. engraved below. O'Malley was hot when he saw that I had seen it, he *was* mad I tell you; gave me a regular lecture about its being ungentlemanly to pry into people's private affairs.

"Served you right, Joe," said Jack Lyndon. "Your curiosity will get you into a big scrape yet. Only *girls* are curious," with lofty contempt.

"Now see here, Jack Lyndon, I didn't mean to pry any more than you, and O'Malley saw I didn't, too, and actually begged my pardon. So there!"

"Oh, stop fussing; do, you fellows," interrupted a quiet-looking boy, who had been a silent listener to the foregoing conversation. "I've thought of a plan."

"Hear! hear! exclaimed all the boys, "when the great and silent Tom speaks, we listen."

"O'Malley has stuck to us in all our scrapes, hasn't he, boys?"

"You bet," was the hearty, boyish answer, and some of them were pretty bad ones, too. You remember last Fourth, when we fired the big cannon in the middle of the night and scared everybody half to death, and how awfully furious the Colonel was; it was O'Malley who kept us from being found out that time."

"Yes, yes," chimed in the others, "and when we nearly blew up the Lyndon's quarters with our chemical experiment last year, it was O'Malley who put out the flames and burned his hands fearfully, too, in doing it."

"And now," and Tom Martin paused impressively, "before I go any further, I want every fellow to swear that he will not tell my plan to a living soul, even if he won't join in it."

"We swear!" the four exclaimed, eagerly.

"Well, all right now," said Tom; then lowering his voice he whispered rapidly: "O'Malley is found guilty and *we've* got to help him to escape. I know the order came this morning, and will be read at dress parade to-night. The clerk in the adjutant's office told me."

"They'll probably keep O'Malley here until a batch of convicts come down from the South Dakota posts, so we'll have plenty of time to work in."

"How will he ever escape from the guard-house?" queried Jack Lyndon.

"Are you all agreed to help in O'Malley's escape?" asked Tom. "See here, Jack, perhaps you'd better draw out; you're the commanding officer's son, which makes it worse for you than for us, though goodness knows it will be bad enough for us if we're found out."

"Draw out! well, I like that; I guess I *won't*," cried Jack, hotly. "What do you take me for?"

"All right, all right," answered Tom, soothingly, "we're all in it now for better, for worse, so here's my plan."

"Here are two files, so if they put him in irons he can easily file them and join the break with a bit of lead. O'Malley has two or three chums who have agreed to get these things to him. What we've got to do is to get a suit of 'cit' clothes and give him enough money to buy a ticket to Omaha and decide on the best night for him to escape. How much can each of you raise? I've got eleven dollars and thirty-five cents myself."

"I've got an even fourteen," said Jack Lyndon.

"I've only got seven," answered Joe Richards, gloomily; "but I could borrow five from my sister; Molly's awfully good about lending me."

"Do!" cried Tom, "if you want us to be found out sure. Don't you dare borrow from any one."

"I've got ten dollars," said Tim Larned, "and that will be plenty; I've been adding it up, and it all comes to forty-two dollars and thirty-five cents."

"Yes, that will be plenty," agreed Tom, "and now I'll have to go; I've got to meet the west-bound 'Flyer,'

we're expecting a visitor to-day; Father Darrough from the Jesuit College in Omaha is going to give us Catholics a mission; he used to be stationed near here at the Rosebud Indian Agency, but was recalled on account of his health; almost all of the regiment who were stationed here four years ago, knew him well. Father and mother think the world of him, indeed we all do. If anything important turns up, or if any one of us hears anything, whoever it is, can give our signal, and we'll all meet here, as soon as possible. So long, there's the stage for the train now," and Tom was off, leaving the others to discuss over and over again the details of the plan of escape.

PART II.

FATHER DARROUGH walked slowly across the hot, dusty parade; he was just returning from baptizing Sergeant M'Ginnis' baby, who, poor little innocent, had only drawn the breath of life to lose it. The priest's fine face, always sad in repose, wore an unusual touch of gravity.

The mystery of life and death was ever new and awful to him. His heart was ever tender towards the sins and sorrows of the people.

He made their troubles his own, his heart ached now for poor Mary M'Ginnis. She was only a young bit of a thing, and not able to bear her first great sorrow with

that pathetic grief of the older women, whom long years of poverty and pain have taught patience.

* * * * * *

From one end of the parade where stood the one-storied adobe guard-house, with its grim iron-barred windows, and armed sentry pacing slowly to and fro, two men started, a gray-haired guard and his prisoner, a mere youth in appearance.

The erect soldierly carriage proclaimed the younger man's calling, but an air of sullen, haughty indifference sat strangely upon the handsome, well-bred features of the boy.

The coarse, brown "fatigue uniform" seemed oddly out of place upon one whose mien was more that of a conquered but rebellious prince, than an army convict "doing time" in the guard-house.

* * * * * *

The two principal actors in the tragedy approached each other unconsciously, the priest still absorbed in pitying thoughts of a young mother's grief for her first-born; the convict so filled with passionate resentment at his fate, as to be oblivious to all outside his own bitter thoughts; behind walked the sentry stolid and unseeing.

Suddenly, when within a few feet of each other, as if in obedience to a sudden and irresistible impulse, the eyes of these two met, priest and convict.

With an unmistakable cry of shame and horror, the convict cried out, as he started back:

"Connor, *Connor*, for God's sake what has brought you here?" then without waiting to hear the reply, with an agony of entreaty in his shaken voice, he turned to the sentry, whispering rapidly and fiercely: "Man, if you've a heart in you, leave us alone for a few moments."

Discipline made the guard hesitate, but the priest's presence was a guarantee that no harm would come of it; he saw, too, that something strange had happened.

"Pshaw, Conway, why hesitate over a small favor to an old 'bunkie.' * I can't escape in broad daylight and if I were mad enough to try it, why (with a significant gesture towards the man's rifle), there is not a better shot in the regiment. I won't try it, I give you my word of honor, the *honor* of a convict," this, with a bitter laugh, sad to hear in one so young. . . .

The strong, clear-cut features of the priest seemed all at once to have aged. "Sentry," he called, but his voice was faint with overpowering emotion; the man did not hear him and moved off slowly.

"Sentry," he called again, the man heard and turned to answer.

"In God's name, tell me what crime this man is accused of?" Conway looked inquiringly at the young convict; he had too much soldierly "esprit de corps" to give his friend away, even to the priest.

"Yes, yes, perhaps it is better; tell him," was the impatient reply to the unspoken inquiry.

*Soldier chum.

"Sergeant Charles O'Malley, under arrest on a charge of forgery," replied the sentry formally; then he turned quickly away, so as not to see the shame and grief on his priest's face.

"Charles O'Malley," echoed the convict, doggedly; but the sullen air of indifference was gone; he was white to the lips and trembling. "Charles O'Malley," murmured the priest, vacantly.

What a flood of tender recollections the rollicking Irish name recalled to this grave austere man of God.

The bare, dusty parade ground, the shame-stricken, cowering figure before him faded away; he was young again, he stood with his beautiful, stately mother beneath the grand old oaks of his ancestral home.

He had just confided to that dear mother the earnest wish of his heart, to serve God in the priesthood; resigning his rights as eldest son to his young brother.

"You have my consent and blessing, Connor," he heard the gentle voice saying, "you have chosen the better part, and my little Brian will grace our proud old name.

As if it were yesterday, he recalled the sudden softening of his mother's somewhat haughty features, as she gazed with loving admiration at the beautiful, brilliant boy who was approaching them on his spirited pony, calling to them to admire his prowess in the saddle, as with a ringing laugh he cleared the high, barred gate at the end of the avenue.

"I am Charles O'Malley to-day, Connor," the merry young voice had called out. How it *rang* out through all these years.

To enact the character of his favorite hero had been Brian's great delight.

The scene shifted, but the figures of those two, so dear to him, stood out so clearly.

The June sun shone through the stained windows of the old abbey chapel.

A young priest was celebrating his first mass.

With what a touch of divine happiness had he turned to give the Bread of Life to these two. Ah, God was good, and life a beautiful, sacred thing.

Again the scene changed—but now the dear mother was worn with tears and anxiety. The boy's face, strangely beautiful still, was there, too, but the look of youthful innocence and purity had fled.

The beauty was like a baleful mask, so Lucifer must have appeared when sin first tarnished his heaven-born beauty.

"I am still Charles O'Malley, Connor, and going to the devil as merrily as he did," the reckless young voice cried out over the long silence of years.

The last scene of all, the shame and disgrace of the youthful heir, the hurried midnight flight and final escape to America; the death of the desolate, heart-broken mother, and ever since that the weary, weary search for the lost sheep.

The bitterness of death was in the past, and yet it

was the brother, not the priest, who spoke in that yearning cry of——

"Brian, my brother; oh, my brother!"

There was no hint of reproach in the cry, only love, pity, and forgiveness.

"Connor, hear me, I swear to you I am innocent. For four years I have served in this army, I won my sergeant's chevrons, and a medal of honor for personal bravery in action, during the Rosebud Indian fight.

"I have hoarded up every penny of my scanty pittance, to replace the sum I took, so that I could return with clean hands to my mother and you.

"Now, listen, how that merciful God you preach of has rewarded my bitter repentance, my efforts to do right.

"Next month I would have been honorably discharged.

"*Two weeks* ago, an officer's name, here in the garrison, was FORGED for a large amount, the crime was brought home to me, through the evidence of one who for three years has been as near and dear to me as a brother."

"You see, God has not forgiven the sin of my youth, so why should you?

"I will not compromise your Reverence by proclaiming the relationship of the saint and the sinner. I am *Charles O'Malley* here. Brian Darrough died years ago."

The young soldier had poured forth his story with

bitter vehemence, but it seemed to fall on unheeding ears. After that first yearning cry of love and pity, the priest had stood as if turned to stone.

Suddenly, with a moan of horror and indignation, he had fallen on his knees, and with the trembling, uncertain fingers of old age had begun to fumble with the fetters that so basely bound the child of his love.

* * * * * *

"Sentry, what is this prisoner doing here?"

It was the officer of the day, who spoke in a tone of sharp reprimand, but even as he did so the prisoner, pulling his gray slouch hat down over his face, moved off at a slow, halting gait, each clank of the irons bruising the heart of the brother and priest.

The sentry thus recalled to his duty called out, "Come now, move on, O'Malley, don't be a whole day a-gettin' acrost de parade."

* * * * * *

The shouts of the tennis players, eager and excited, came floating over the still air.

"Thirty, love," cried a clear, girlish voice gleefully. "Oh, dear, what a serve, you sent that ball nearly to the guard-house." "Oh, sentry, sentry, please send me that ball." With quick impulse, the prisoner turned to stop the ball, forgetting the irons which fettered him; he stumbled awkwardly, and came down heavily on one knee, but he managed to reach the ball just as the young girl, panting and laughing from her quick run, stopped at his side.

"Oh, thank you," said the gay, sweet voice; then, for the first time recognizing the prisoner, the young girl's face flushed, she came a step nearer to the convict, who stood sullen and silent; then she, the "Colonel's daughter," forgetful of all else, save the look of despairing misery in the young face before her, exclaimed eagerly and with girlish sincerity: "Oh! Sergeant O'Malley, I AM so sorry to see you there," with a faint gesture towards the guard house. "But I for one don't believe you're guilty, and none of the boys do, either." A curious, unconventional thing for the girl to do; but then the Colonel's daughter was always doing unconventional things, so the feminine critics of the regiment said. Her little sympathetic speech caused the hard look to vanish and a gentle, half smile stole over the young prisoner's face.

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"Father Darrough, you are ill; this sun has been too much for you," exclaimed the young officer of the day; "here, take my arm, sir, and allow me to help you to my quarters."

The priest leaned heavily on the strong, young arm.

"I saw you talking with young O'Malley," rattled on the young officer; "queer case that; the fellow is evidently a gentleman, has had a fine record until he got into this scrape; gambling, I'm afraid, has worked the mischief with him."

"He's sworn to kill the man that betrayed him, and

he has made two attempts at the risk of his life to get away, so we had to put him in irons."

"Queer case, don't you think, Father?" But with a low moan the priest had fallen heavily to the ground.

PART III.

THE night was black and sullen, heavy storm clouds hung in low, muttering masses over the prairie.

The very air seemed thick and difficult to breathe; the sentinel on number one shifted his piece uneasily and mechanically crossed himself; suddenly an unusually vivid flash of lightning showed to his sleepy eyes a fine streak of flame running up the walls of "F" Company barracks. Instantly the report of his rifle rang, arousing the slumbering garrison, and almost instantly the company buglers, barely awake, were blowing "Fire Call" furiously.

The response was immediate, the discipline perfect, the fire companies had formed almost without commands, and taking up the double time, were soon at work extinguishing the fire. With the old-fashioned hand engine and the not over generous supply of fire buckets, they made very little headway, and the flames soon enveloped the entire barracks.

Fifty human beings slept in the upper story of the

burning building; bewildered by the flames and smoke they rushed madly about.

With ringing shouts of encouragement their comrades worked heroically to get them out in safety. The prisoners had been turned out to take their turn at the fire buckets; they were in charge of only one sentinel, and he had lost his head during the excitement, and stood with his back to the line of prisoners.

"My chance has come at last," thought O'Malley. He was trembling under the strain of powerful emotion.

With a quick, noiseless wrench of his athletic young frame he burst his irons; they had been filed through and carefully filled in with lead for two days now, waiting for just some such happy chance as this.

Just then four scantily clad boys came rushing to the fire, and as Tom drew near the little line of prisoners, he handed O'Malley a full bucket, taking the empty one himself, and whispered excitingly: "Now, O'Malley, is your chance; everything is ready, follow me."

Just then a hand was laid softly on O'Malley's shoulder.

"God bless thee, lad, my little lad. Do your duty bravely, and have no fear. I will save you, Brian."

"Some one will hear you, Connor," cried the boy roughly, trying to hide his emotion by an assumed hardness of manner, but his voice was very tender as he spoke.

"To-morrow, lad, the whole world shall know, for

have I not found my sheep that was lost," murmured Father Darrough, softly.

The prisoner next in line stared in puzzled amazement at this tender greeting between the priest and prisoner, then in the mad excitement of the moment forgot them.

"I'll wait till Connor turns the corner," muttered the convict doggedly, "then," he drew his breath sharply, "it will go hard with me if I don't get away this time. I swear they shan't take me alive."

"Call the roll, sergeant," ordered the Captain of "F" Co., as the last, dazed, smoke-begrimed figure was assisted out of the burning building. Rapidly the sergeant rattled off the familiar names; quickly, but feebly, the response came, "Here," "here," when suddenly the sergeant paused, then cried out wildly: "Harvey! has any one seen Harvey?" He slept by himself in the orderly room.

A human being in those seething flames! A groan of horror went up from the crowd.

It was useless to think of rescue; even now the walls were tottering and ready to fall.

Suddenly, a tall, slight figure darted forward, and before the shuddering, panic-stricken groups could divine his purpose had disappeared in the burning death-trap. "*It's* O'MALLEY," some one whispered, the whisper grew into a shout, a hoarse roar of mad enthusiasm for the prisoner, who was risking his life for the false friend who had betrayed him.

With an anguished cry of love and terror, Father

Darrough started to follow, but a hundred eager hands restrained him, even as the priest struggled to free himself; the prisoner, carrying a silent, helpless figure, staggered to an open window; exhausted, he paused an instant, framed in a mass of seething flames.

"Let him drop, O'Malley, we'll catch him," shouted a hundred voices, and Harvey was soon safe. "Jump, jump, O'Malley, quick, the walls are falling," they cried, and heedless of danger they rushed close to the crumbling walls.

The prisoner hesitated, he seemed dazed. "Come, lad, come, Brian, JUMP;" it was Father Darrough's voice. "Coming, Connor." *Was* it O'Malley who spoke?

But even as the answer came, the walls gave way, and with a sickening crash fell outwards. . . .

"O'Malley," it was the kindly, white-haired Colonel who spoke, "Harvey is dying, he has confessed that he was the forger; he say's he can't die in peace unless you will forgive him. Can you pardon the terrible wrong he has done you?

"Yes, as I hope for forgiveness," whispered the white lips, faintly.

"Come, my boy, brace up, you must get well, the regiment can't spare so good a soldier;" the Colonel's kindly voice broke a little here, he had a soldier lad of his own serving far away from his home.

The dying boy smiled faintly, then said softly, "Connor, you gave me my first Communion; give me my last."

Slowly and haltingly the story of the wasted young

life was told, when the words of the absolution were pronounced, a look of infinite peace stole over the lad's face; the early morning sun shone brightly in, touching up the big, bare hospital ward with a golden glory, and resting on the dark brown curls, like a halo of pardon and benediction.

The Colonel and the senior post surgeon knelt reverently as the priest approached to give the "Viaticum" to the dying soldier—the Life of the world, that death might be easier.

He spoke only once again, so low that the priest had to place his ear against the trembling lips to catch his words.

"Tell—the—boys, this—is best,—I have escaped."

"It is good to die in peace, Connor. My Jesus, merc——"

And Charles O'Malley's story was ended.

THE LIVELY LITTLES;

OR

QUARTERS NO. 10.

CHAPTER I.

UNWELCOME NEWS.

THE first call for guard-mounting was just sounding as the spruce young mail-orderly thrust a package of letters and newspapers into the huge mail-box that adorned the front door of Captain Little's quarters: "No. 10" they were designated on the post roster.

Instantly a wild shout from within was heard, and the daily lively scramble for the mail ensued, each of the five sturdy boys of the household bent upon obtaining possession.

This was a daily occurrence, and it did not at all disturb the serenity of the pretty, youthful-looking lady who presided over the coffee-pot.

"Little Mother," as her five lads lovingly called her, was quite used to the inevitable noise made by five healthy, fun-loving boys.

"Anything for me, Tom?" she called.

"Where's my morning paper, Thomas, lad?" demanded Captain Little.

"Here you are, sir—a whole column of army news too," responded that young gentleman, handing over the paper; then turning to his mother and handing her a large, square envelope with a tiny crest of scarlet and gold on it, he asked eagerly:

"Who is your swell correspondent, mother?"

The younger boys were already absorbed in their bowls of oat-meal and cream, but paused long enough to hear the reply:

"It is from Uncle John, and if you will all excuse me, I will just skim it over and see what he has to say."

The skimming process did not take long, and as Mrs. Little hurriedly read to the end she exclaimed, "Well!" so excitedly that even the captain was aroused from his beloved paper.

"Eh, what! what is it, Mary?" he exclaimed vaguely.

"Why, John writes that he is utterly broken down—nervous prostration—and has been ordered by his physicians to take a six months' absolute rest. He wishes to sail on the twentieth and asks us as a great favor to take charge of Annette during his absence."

"Poor John! he has never gotten over his wife's death. A complete change will do him all the good in the world. Write at once, Mary, and tell him how sorry we are to hear of his ill health; tell him we will

take the best of care of the little girl. With five boys she is not likely to mope much."

"Of course we must take the little girl. Annette is a little girl in years—not yet fifteen—but, poor child, she is quite a fine grown-up young lady in her own estimation. She has been three years now at a fashionable New York boarding-school, has her own French maid, and altogether I am afraid I shall feel as if I had a small white elephant on my hands," said Mrs. Little, ruefully.

"Nonsense, my dear!" replied the captain gallantly, "as if *your* niece could be otherwise than charming. Besides, I've never seen a child yet but thought garrison life the best kind of fun. With a pony to ride, tennis, and five gallant cousins to escort her around, what more could a girl want? She was a pretty, sweet child the last time I saw her, and a few years even at a fashionable boarding-school can't have entirely spoiled her."

"I hope not; but I saw Annette just a year ago, and with her 'tailor' gowns and hair dressed by the French maid she was quite an imposing personage," answered Mrs. Little, smiling.

"If she's stuck up and won't play 'one old cat,' I shan't 'scort her," asserted Teddy, the youngest of the five. While Mac and Brian, the twins, had scornfully elevated their small noses at the thought of a girl coming into the family to spoil everything.

Will's face was noncommittal; if Annette would help

him with his "specimens"—and girls *were* good at that sort of thing—he shouldn't mind her coming so much.

Even sixteen-year old Tom—"the greatest ladies' man in all the clan," his mother often declared—had not looked over pleased at the thought of the new inmate. He had just returned from college, and it was hard on a fellow to have his vacation spoiled by a "stuck-up chit of a girl," for so Tom mentally characterized the unknown cousin.

Captain Little laughed at the small tempest his wife's comments had raised.

"Boys, boys! wait and judge for yourselves. Remember, lads, Annette has no 'Little Mother' now to set her straight. Be your own kindly, honest selves, and the little cousin will love you all."

This was at once a reminder and an appeal, and touched the lads in the right spot. Tom smiled and answered heartily, "We will, sir," while Teddy ceased to scowl and remarked that girls could make dandy sails, and his boat needed a new set.

As soon as breakfast was over Tom followed his mother to the "den," as the cozy, pretty sitting-room was called.

Here the captain smoked unmolested; the boys studied and played; Teddy's boats, a whole fleet of them, occupied an entire shelf in the big quartermaster's bookcase, whose curtained doors concealed all sorts of boyish treasures within its spacious depths.

Will's specimens were allowed to remain undisturbed and *undusted*—though I am afraid this may horrify some orderly souls. The bats and balls of the twins occupied their own especial space; while Tom had a whole shelf to himself for his "rackets"—one a regular beauty he had won at the championship game at college —and his football outfit. The big ball itself was kept carefully in an empty tin cake-box, donated by Nora the cook.

Tom's great though secret ambition was to play "half back" in the college team, and in order to deserve this future honor, he practised faithfully an hour or so every day. But it was neither tennis nor football that occupied his mind just at that moment. He bad been fighting a small battle with himself, and had come to complete the victory.

"Well, dear old man, what can I do for you?" said Mrs. Little, who called her boys all sorts of odd pet names; she was deep in her housekeeping books, and did not even look up.

"I have come to say, mother, that Annette may have my room. I'll turn in with Will. But I shall make him understand that he is not to keep live snakes, lizards, and bugs while I have to room with him."

"Tom, dear, I am very grateful to you for offering to give up your pleasant room of your own free will. It seems too bad to turn you out; but do the best I can, I am afraid Annette will find it anything but luxurious after her own beautiful home.'

"Once I get my duds out, you will rig it up shipshape and pretty I know. Girls would far rather have things pretty than comfortable any day," answered Tom, with lofty masculine contempt of feminine fripperies.

Mrs. Little laughed, but answered: "Yes, dear, we must try and make it as pretty as possible; so just run over to the company and ask the first sergeant to send the carpenter over here."

"There is one thing," said Mrs. Little decidedly, as Tom dashed off to do her bidding—"I shall write John that I simply cannot take care of the French maid. The Harveys will return from their leave about the twentieth, and they will be only too glad to bring Annette with them. And now, as my boys would say, I must 'hustle,' and out of my odds and ends contrive as pretty and dainty a room as possible for the little heiress—who, poor child! is after all only a motherless little girl. If only she had not been with Madam Blanck these years!"

CHAPTER II.

THE ARRIVAL.

THE boys had been up since "reveille"; though, as the "Flyer" was not due until eight o'clock, they might as well have had their usual morning naps.

At last the rattle of the ambulance* was heard as it turned the corner by the adjutant's office and, with its four mules, came dashing down the line in front of the "Officers' Row."

As it pulled up in front of the Littles' quarters not a boy was to be seen; only Mrs. Little came running down the walk to greet the weary little traveller, who won her kind aunt's heart at once by throwing her arms around her neck and sobbing out, "Oh! dear Aunt Mary, I am so glad to see you. I miss mamma more and more every day; and I am so tired."

"Not spoiled yet," was Mrs. Little's secret thought as she clasped the tired child in her loving arms; while Captain Little, to hide his emotion, began calling loudly: "Here you boys, where are you all? Tom, Will, your cousin has arrived."

Teddy was the first to appear. "How do you do?" he said sedately, extending his little hand formally; then, seeing signs of the recent tears, he added condescendingly, "You *may* kiss me this time, but I'se not 'ticularly fond of it."

This broke the ice at once, and by the time breakfast was announced the six cousins were chatting merrily.

As Delia was bringing in the last plate of crisp brown waffles the buglers commenced sounding the "assembly."

"Oh! what's that, Uncle Fritz?" cried Annette eagerly; "what are they going to do?"

* The army name for a covered spring wagon.

"Come and see," answered Tom.

"Wait until I get my hat and I will."

"Oh! never mind your hat; the parade is so shady you won't need it; you're far too pale anyway. A little sunburn will improve you," replied Master Tom.

"Well really, Tom, you are very frank," said the girl, not knowing whether to be vexed or amused.

"Most boys are," retorted that young gentleman composedly.

As they took their seats on a bench in front of the commanding officer's quarters, the regimental band struck up a lively air, and groups or squads of soldiers, in full dress, stood ready to march out from the different companies to the center of the parade ground, where the new guard was mounted each day.

"Oh! there's uncle. What does he have to do, Tom, with his best clothes on and his sword, too?"

"Father's the new officer of the day. He is going to march on—that means he is on duty to-day as commander of the guard, or sentinels, who keep watch over the post. That young officer over there is Lieutenant Davis, the 'old officer of the day'; he marches off this morning. The call you just heard was 'assembly,' and the men, as you see, have 'fallen in' in front of their companies."

"Oh, dear! it sounds very puzzling, but very fascinating too," said Annette.

"You'll soon catch on, after you have been here a week or two; I'll promise to answer all your questions."

"Begin right now then, and explain what is going on now," demanded Annette.

"That's adjutant's call now, that the bugler is sounding; and now the band is playing for the guard details to march. See, there they come and form into line, right by the flag staff," said Tom good-naturedly.

"What a pretty ceremony it is, Tom. I should never tire of looking at it," Annette said.

"I never do. There is one other ceremony, though, that is quite as pretty, called the 'escort of color'; we shall probably have it to-night at dress parade. I will read up 'tactics' in the meantime so as to answer correctly all the questions you're sure to ask."

"Who is that officer who seems to do so much bossing? Why he is actually ordering uncle around. There! look, Tom. What on earth is he doing now?"

"Inspecting the men to see if they are clean, and their equipments in good order," said Tom.

"How horrid of him! How would he like it, I wonder, to be poked around in that fashion?" cried Annette.

"Well, Annette, you will have to excuse him; he is adjutant, and in doing what you object to he is only obeying his orders. See now, he is picking out an orderly for the commanding officer," replied Tom, much amused. "He'll have hard work to choose one, too, for 'Shorty' and Dooley always 'buck' for orderly. 'Buck' is the soldier word for 'try hard,' or 'do your best.' He can't decide which to give it to; they'll have to draw straws for it.

"Now the band is going to sound off—that is, it marches up and down the line of the guard playing its prettiest music."

"But, Tom, what is an orderly?" asked Annette.

"Well, the cleanest man on guard is picked out for orderly duty. He follows the colonel around all day, runs messages and *sometimes* waits on the colonel's wife," he replied.

"I can't see any great advantage in being orderly," said Annette thoughtfully.

"There is one, though; the orderly doesn't have to walk post," explained the boy; but as Annette only looked puzzled over his explanation, he added: "The orderly can go to his barracks and sleep all night; he is excused from all sentry duty."

"I understand that better," began Annette, when they were interrupted by the twins, who came rushing up to say that every child in the post was waiting to be introduced to the new cousin.

"Where are they all?" demanded Tom of his small brothers.

"Over on the big tennis court," answered the twins in one breath—their usual mode of speaking.

"Well, come on; we may as well have it over," said Tom, as if he were talking of some painful operation.

"*Must* I, Tom? Are there many of them? Are they nice?" cried Annette.

"Which shall I answer first? Yes, miss, there *are* lots of them"—with an airy wave of his hand, which might

mean a hundred or more—"and you must meet them all; and they are all nice, with one or two exceptions. So come on; I'll see you safe through it. Are you pretty fair at tennis?"

"Fair to middling," laughed Annette pleasantly.

"Very well, then; we will have time for a set or two before it gets too hot. The boys all play a good game, and some of the girls, too, fairly well."

Annette said nothing, but resolved privately to show this patronizing cousin of hers that she knew a thing or two about tennis. She was anxious now to find out Tom's likes and dislikes amongst his playmates, for already she felt as if they would agree on most matters.

She began confidentially: "Tell me who I am to like, Tom, and whom to dislike?"

"No indeed; that would not be fair at all. You must judge for yourself."

"Who is that sweet-looking girl with the pretty brown hair and lovely gray eyes?"

"That's Elinor Deane, and she's as nice as she is pretty," Tom had just time to whisper as they approached the group of boys and girls lounging on the soft green grass under the big shady cottonwoods.

"This is my cousin, boys and girls—Annette Harold. I hope you'll all like each other and that we'll have lots of jolly times together this vacation."

Such was Tom's bluff, boyish introduction; but it answered the purpose very well, and presently the

children were talking as unrestrainedly as though they had been old friends.

Some one proposed tennis; but just then three shrill whistles were heard, followed by a short one. Tom jumped to his feet, saying: "Come, Annette, that is our call; we are wanted at home."

Mrs. Little was waiting for them on the shady porch.

"Annette must certainly rest this morning. The very idea of tennis after a four days' journey! Come, dear, settle yourself comfortably in the big hammock, and Teddy shall come and amuse you. I want my 'dear old man' to go to market for me. I won't bribe you, Tom, but there shall be a big pitcherful of lemonade for thirsty souls in about half an hour."

"I'll be here," called Tom as he dashed off to saddle up, while Annette found the hammock so comfortable she dropped off into a most refreshing slumber much to Teddy's disgust.

First call for "dress parade" found the two cousins seated on the muzzle of the big cannon which stood in front of the colonel's quarters purely for ornament. It was a favorite seat with the youthful members of the garrison, though why it was would have been hard to decide.

The city girl was charmed with the brilliancy and novelty of the whole scene.

Officers in full dress hurried across the parade, pulling on their white gloves as they went. Sergeants in front of the different companies were calling the roll,

and having the men count off in sets of four. The band was giving little preliminary toots over in front of their barracks.

The dashing young adjutant and the stately old colonel, in their gold lace and white plumes, Nan thought simply fascinating.

"We are very proud of our 'Colors,' Nan," explained Tom, "and we have a right to be—our regiment is entitled to have TWELVE battles engraved upon the silver rings on the flagstaff, for it won distinction on the field at Bull Run, Antietam, Gettysburg, and nine others."

There was a slight tremor in Tom's voice; he was very proud of the dear old 31st, in which he was born and had grown up.

"The colors are kept at the colonel's house," continued the boy to his absorbed auditor. "See, the color escort is going after them now."

It *was* a pretty sight, and one the girl never forgot. The long, dark line of troops, waiting motionless until the regimental and national colors should be escorted with due ceremony to the 'color company' designated to receive them.

The escort, without any music, marched to the colonel's quarters, and halted in front of the house. The color-bearer, preceded by his first lieutenant and followed by a sergeant, went inside for the flags. As they came out carrying the beautiful flags they halted, and the escort presented arms.

It made Nan's heart thrill with patriotic emotion to see the military honors paid to our "Star-spangled Banner." She had never imagined anything like it.

The buglers sounded a queer, lively call, known in "Tactics" as "to the Color," a musical military salute. Then the band struck up a lively air, and so the colors were duly escorted to the place in the "line." After parade was over, with equal ceremony they were returned to the commanding officer's quarters for safe-keeping.

"It is all perfectly lovely, Tom," exclaimed Annette, with a little sigh of delight. "I didn't know we had anything so sort of romantic and patriotic; I can't exactly explain what I mean, but you understand, don't you?"

"Yes, I guess I do," laughed Tom. "That is what this small army is for, Annette; to keep a little patriotic sentiment agoing in this prosaic, money-grubbing country of ours."

"Well, I think it needs it," Annette declared.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPOILED CHILD

ANNETTE had found her first day's experience of army life very pleasant but fatiguing, so when Mrs. Little announced bed-time, at nine o'clock, she was quite ready to follow her aunt to her pretty rooms upstairs.

Teddy had been in bed an hour; but she noticed the other four boys followed Mrs. Little to her room, and presently a low, steady murmur of voices greeted her ears.

"I wonder what they are doing," she thought. "I think I shall just have to peep;" so she tip-toed down the hall, and paused opposite the open door of Mrs. Little's room. There, down on her knees before a very pretty oratory, was the "little mother" with her four lads grouped around her, and they were saying the beads.

Annette slipped in quietly, but made no response until Mrs. Little finished with the "Glory be to the Father," and ended up with the "Creed."

"How nice that you say family prayers, auntie! May I join you every evening? But where is Uncle Fritz?"

"He is, like you, dear child, not a Catholic," began her aunt, a bit sadly; but the girl interrupted her.

"Oh! but I am a Catholic, Aunt Mary; only not a Romanist."

She had learned this at the fashionable High-Church boarding-school. Mrs. Little smiled, but said nothing.

"Of course, Aunt Mary, I cannot join in the worship of the Virgin and saints, but otherwise I will be glad to join in your services while I am here. It seems so odd, Aunt Mary, that you should be a Romanist; none of our family are; but, of course, I know you are a convert. We were awfully 'High' at madam's—had candles, incense, acolytes, and a big crucifix."

"Come whenever you like, dear," said Mrs. Little, as she kissed Annette good-night, taking no notice of the challenge in her foolish little speech.

But Tom had grown very red in the face, and was on the point of telling his cousin what he thought of her rude, silly speech, but a quiet look from his mother restrained him.

* * * * * *

Bang! went the big reveille gun, scaring Annette half out of her wits. Like the old gentleman in the "Night before Christmas," she sprang from her bed to see what was the matter—when out on the lawn there arose such a clatter; eight buglers blowing away with all their might the cheery army getting-up tune:

"I can't get 'em up, I can't get 'em up,
I can't get 'em up in the morning."

At the first note of reveille the flag was carefully hoisted, and floating softly in the morning breeze announced that day—the official day of the garrison—had begun.

Then she saw Uncle Fritz suddenly appear, looking only half awake; and when all the sergeants had shouted something at him, he seemed satisfied and went sleepily back to his quarters. Hardly had he disappeared when a bugler came out and sounded a lively air. Instantly every soldier was out of sight; it was breakfast call.

It was a beautiful morning, and the girl found the

far-reaching view from her quaint dormer-window a novel and strangely lovely one to her city-bred eyes. As far as the eye could see stretched the great prairie.

Immediately in front of her lay the small group of government buildings; the guard-house with its iron doors and barred windows, and solemn sentry, pacing slowly to and fro, seemed delightfully mysterious.

Long, low adobe buildings occupied one whole side of the square around which the post was built; these were the men's barracks, and when presently from the one at the farthest end of the line appeared a blanketed figure with long black hair and moccasined feet, Annette gave a little shriek. "*Indians*, real live *Indians!*" she exclaimed excitedly. "Oh! I must get up; I shouldn't have another wink of sleep, and I am so afraid I will miss something." So saying she began to dress hurriedly and reached the front porch in time to see three long lines of ghostly-looking figures, robed in peculiar-looking white duck coats, making their way across the further end of the parade in evident obedience to a very rollicking call which the indefatigable bugler had just played.

"Who are they, and what are they doing?" cried Annette in despair.

"Cavalrymen, going to 'stables,'" said Tom's voice unexpectedly.

"Good morning, Tom," she answered gayly. "I am awfully glad you are here to explain what is going

on; I simply could not go to sleep after the cannon wakened me."

"You won't notice it after you've been here a week or so," returned the boy; but there was an evident lack of pleasant boyish cordiality which even the self-absorbed girl noticed.

The little scene of the night before rankled in Tom's mind, and only for his tacit promise to "little mother" he would have freed his mind to Annette.

* * * * * *

Everything had been so lovely the day of Annette's arrival that Mrs. Little thought her impressions of her niece, gathered during a short visit the previous year, might have been prejudiced, but she was soon to discover that she had not been entirely mistaken.

As the lads disappeared from the pleasant breakfast-table to do their daily tasks, such as watering the small grass-plot in front of the house, feeding the chickens, attending to their ponies, and so on, Mrs. Little called to Annette:

"My dear," she began pleasantly, "yesterday you were company, but now you are one of the family and shall have your daily work with the rest of the flock. I shall expect you to care for your own room, keep it very tidy and orderly, so that, with the weekly cleaning Delia is able to give, it will prove quite sufficient to make it as dainty and as neat as a pin—as a young girl's room should be."

Annette had listened to the first part of her aunt's

speech with a look of incredible surprise; then a haughty look settled upon her face as she answered disagreeably:

"Do you wish me to do such *servant's* work? I don't know how to make beds and sweep, and I am sure papa would not wish me to. I never did such things in my life."

"'Tis high time you learned, then, my dear girl," said Mrs. Little in her cheery way. "I will answer for papa. You may be sure that I will ask nothing of you that papa would not approve of. There are no drones in this hive. Why, Nannie girl, with the exception of baby Ted, the boys all care for their own rooms, make their beds, sweep, and dust. Come and see their 'dens,'" said "little mother" laughingly, though a mist of sudden tears dimmed her soft blue eyes, for this bed-making on the boys' part was Tom's idea. He had found it was the mother's tired little hands that cleared up their boyish clutter day after day, and proposed that their bed-rooms should be regulated by the West Point system. So their small sleeping-rooms were arranged as much as possible like the cadet alcoves they had seen at the Point.

But Annette did not smile at the two spotless, uncarpeted little rooms, with their iron cots, and bed-clothing fixed *à la militaire.* She looked angry and sullen; Mrs. Little thought it best to pay no attention, and left her to accomplish her task alone.

"Hateful thing!" cried the girl when her aunt was

out of hearing. "I will not do this horrid work. I will pay Delia extra. I will change my dress now, and go out and meet some of the girls."

So a very elaborate pink muslin was donned, and Annette, simply shutting her door, walked off to find Delia, who agreed readily enough to make her bed; so, satisfied that matters were arranged nicely, the young lady marched off and did not appear until luncheon-time.

"The very idea of Aunt Mary expecting such work of me!" muttered Nan uneasily, for her conscience would prick. "I am sure if I am willing to pay Delia for her work, Aunt Mary need not object."

But the young girl had not seen her father's letter to his sister begging her to teach his little girl to be useful, to be something more than a useless, helpless, fine young lady.

"Let her be one of the family, Mary," he had written, "sharing the work as well as the play of your five lads."

CHAPTER IV.

A PEACEFUL VICTORY.

"MOTHER, I've borrowed Elinor's side-saddle for this afternoon. May I give Annette her first riding lesson?" asked Tom.

"Not this afternoon, dear; your cousin has her work to finish," replied Mrs. Little gravely.

Annette flushed hotly and began an explanation, but her aunt hushed her, telling her they would talk it over in her room after luncheon.

The boys saw that something had gone wrong, so took no further notice.

What Mrs. Little said and did no one ever knew, but a very subdued little girl, with every trace of ill-temper gone, emerged from Mrs. Little's sanctum, and made herself so sweet and pleasant that Teddy gave her an extra hug at bed-time, declaring she was most as good as another boy in the family.

The Fourth of July, and such a scorcher! No fireworks of any kind were allowed inside the garrison proper, so the young people had betaken themselves, with firecrackers and "punk," to the "target range," a hot, dusty spot, but one where there was no danger of setting fire to "Uncle Sam's" buildings.

"Nan, will you make me some sizzles?" begged Teddy—the formal "Annette" was a thing of the past.

"Oh! don't bother, Ted; can't you see I'm busy now? Look out, Elinor; there's one going off right under your foot!"

Ted sat down looking hurt, but went on patiently making "sizzles," as he called them, for himself.

"Girls, come here!" cried Elizabeth Kent, who was standing off some little distance, the center of an

animated group of boys and girls, who seem to be hotly arguing some matter with Tom Little.

"Just listen to Tom, Nan; the boys are going to send off a can full of firecrackers under old "Yellow-Bird's tepee"; * the old squaw can't speak a word of English, and it will give her a fine scare. Tom says that if we go over by the tepees we'll be disobeying the colonel's orders, and he won't go."

"Do, Tom, it will be great fun," said Annette coaxingly; but the boy remained obdurate.

Then Nan lost her temper and cried hotly: "Never mind, he's *afraid;* I never could bear *cowards;* we'll go without him!"

The word coward rankled in Tom's mind; he wondered if he had been too particular; but no, he was *right* not to disobey, and some time he would show them he was no coward, only a boy who tried to do right.

The bombarding party had returned; their plan had fallen rather flat, for the old squaw did not show up at all; but old Yellow-Bird had come out and sworn at them in Sioux.

Tom was amusing Teddy near one of the big target "butts," building him a sand fort. Nan thought she would like to make friends with the two, so started slowly in their direction, firing an occasional cracker as she walked. "Buzz, buzz, buzz!" What an odd sound; it made her ears ring!

* An Indian tent.

What was it? Where did it come from? What was Tom shouting to her? The fatal "buzz-z-z" sounded at her very feet.

A long, loathsome object, the color of the prairie, made a quick spring, and Annette felt a sudden sharp sting just above her pretty low tan shoe.

Before she knew what had really happened Tom, with white, despairing face, had stunned the rattler, and had stripped her stocking off.

Yes, there were the two tiny, fatal wounds, just above the ankle.

"Sit still!" commanded the boy sternly; then taking his penknife slashed the wound freely, then gently applying his lips to the rapidly darkening skin, he carefully sucked the poison out.

By this time the others had come up, and while Jack Darrow proceeded to make sure the snake was dead, Harry Wynn had flown back to the garrison for assistance.

That evening a very pale, subdued little girl lay on the big, comfortable lounge in "little mother's" room, and in an agony of grief and repentance had begged Tom's pardon for her taunt in the morning.

The post-surgeon, kind old Dr. Brown, had made it very plain to the young girl just what an heroic act her cousin had done. "In all probability, you owe your life to Tom's presence of mind and brave deed. He ran the chance of being fatally poisoned; one slight break of the skin of his lips would have been sufficient,"

finished the doctor, as he dressed the poor, swollen limb, already black to the knee.

Mrs. Little did not say much, but Nan saw her clasp her big boy in her arms with such a look of tender love and admiration that her own eyes moistened in sympathy.

It was good to see the look of fatherly pride in Captain Little's face as he wrung Tom's hand, and patted him on the back lovingly.

When the hour for evening prayers came Nan begged to stay, and she felt her heart lifted up in loving gratitude as Mrs. Little poured out her fervent thanks to the Sacred Heart of her Saviour for this merciful protection of her dear ones.

When the boys had said good night, Nan heard her whisper softly, as she knelt for a moment before an exquisite picture of the "Mater Dolorosa": "O Heavenly Mother! what do I not owe thee? O Mary! thou who knowest all a mother's love and anguish, I thank thee for thy loving intercession this day. I feel that thou didst intercede with thy Divine Son for my son's life."

Nan looked for an instant at the tender, loving face of the Mother of Jesus, and wished that she too could ask favors of the Saviour's Mother.

* * * * * *

It was some time before Nan recovered from the effects of the poison, but as all the young people of the post vied with each other in devising new amusements for the invalid, time passed very pleasantly.

"Walking-Elk," one of the young Indian sergeants, even brought her a beautiful pair of beaded moccasins for the injured foot ; for it was impossible to get a shoe on.

Teddy was her devoted slave, and Nan learned to love the quaint little fellow dearly.

Will and the twins brought her pretty wild flowers, and Will even fixed up a small aquarium for her amusement, the twins bringing home great buckets of small fish to stock it with, until Will remonstrated, telling them to try and catch a horned toad instead, as Nan had never seen one, and they were very hard to find.

* * * * * *

"Two whole weeks, and no scrapes in the Little family," remarked "little mother" after breakfast one morning; "after the calm comes a storm, and this heavenly peace is too good to last, I am afraid. No more snake-bites, however, if you please."

CHAPTER V.

AN EXCITING ADVENTURE.

COMPANY "I," the Indian Company, had only been organized about six months before Nan's advent, and was still a sufficient novelty to be of great interest to the youthful members of the garrison.

These strange, dark-skinned soldiers exercised a terrible fascination over Teddy. He was desperately afraid of them, and yet he loved to watch them at their games and amusements.

The long row of "tepees" in the rear of the company where dwelt the squaws of the married men, and the visiting relatives—of whom there were always plenty, particularly on pay-day—was a most attractive spot to Master Ted. He would stand by the hour watching the Indian women cook and sew, and the dirty babies laughing and playing in the mud or dust.

The squaws admired his long golden curls immensely, and would call softly to each other "Washti, washti papoose" (beautiful child).

Teddy did not object to their admiration at a distance; but let one of them approach him, and he was off like a shot, his heart beating like a small trip-hammer. But to no one except his mother had he confessed his nervous dread of the Indians.

Captain and Mrs. Little occupied a large room on the ground-floor, back of the sitting-room, and Ted's small brass cot stood in one corner, directly opposite the long French windows that opened on the side porch.

* * * * * *

It was a very hot August night, and somehow Ted could not sleep; he lay with both his big blue eyes wide open "talking with the stars," as he called it.

The familiar everyday garrison looked very strange

and lonely at night. It made him feel very comfortable to know that his mother was so near that if he called her, even ever so softly, she would come to him.

The blue eyes had closed sleepily for a moment, then with a stare of horror and amazement had opened wide. A tall, dark form, with long, black hair fantastically braided, and blanket thrown over the shoulders, stood at the open window muttering something in Sioux.

The child was nearly paralyzed with terror, yet he managed to creep out of his bed without attracting the notice of the unearthly visitor.

"Papa!" he called softly, with a long sobbing sigh, "O dear papa! please wake up and save us."

Then, as Captain Little stirred sleepily, Teddy, with a shriek of despair, cried wildly: "An Indian, papa; an Indian right here in our room!"

With a cry of rage Captain Little jumped from the bed and flung himself fiercely upon the intruder. The captain was a tall, powerfully built man, but as he wrestled with his Indian adversary it was hard to say which would win.

The Indian had never ceased his strange mutterings and moaning.

Mrs. Little, with the hysterical child sobbing in her arms, sat still, too utterly dazed and frightened to know what to do.

"Show—a—light—at—the—window—Mary—and fire off your pistol; it will bring the guard quicker than

in any other way; I—can—just—hold—my own with this brute."

The captain had gasped this out slowly; he could not afford to lose his breath, and he felt that if he loosened his hold upon the Indian, even for the instant necessary to grasp the pistol, all would be over.

Hardly had the report of the pistol ceased when the cheerful rattle of the guard was heard, and Mr. Barton, officer of the day, with the sergeant and a man or two, had rushed upon the Indian and soon had him under control.

By this time every one in the house was awake and came rushing downstairs too late to be of any use.

"By Jove, Barton! you came just in time. That fellow had the grip of a tiger; he acts as if he were crazy—kept asking for water. I know just enough Sioux to recognize the word."

"I believe he is crazy or delirious," said Mr. Barton, who had been examining the prisoner closely.

Suddenly he turned pale and exclaimed something, and, telling one of the men to run for the doctor, he turned to Captain Little and said:

"Let every one, Captain, leave the room instantly, but ourselves and the guard; here, you men, lend me a hand and we'll lay the prisoner outside on the porch."

When the room was cleared he said: "This Indian is mad with the *small-pox*, Captain; I feel sure it is 'Crazy-Horse,' the old ex-chief; he escaped from the Agency hospital yesterday, and I have had orders to keep a

lookout for him. He was probably wandering around in search of water when he strayed in here."

The doctor's arrival only confirmed the young officer's suspicions; the unfortunate Indian was removed to the small building where contagious diseases were cared for, but the poor old fellow died the very next day.

Meantime the Littles had a very disagreeable time of it. They were all fumigated and put in quarantine, but the captain fared the worst.

He had been in such close contact with the dreadful disease that the colonel ordered him to occupy a small tent near the hospital until all danger of contagion was past; but this wasn't the worst of it. After he was nearly choked by the sulphur, the doctor decided that he must have his hair shaved; and shaved it was.

The captain said if that were necessary, for his part he was content to stay in quarantine until he could raise a new crop of hair.

The children all felt that being in "quarantine" was very delightful and important; and when an extra sentry was placed on duty over the walk in front of their quarters, the Littles were envied by all the younger portion of the garrison.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PICNIC.

NAN wrote a very lively account of their Indian adventure to her absent father; but she felt very

grateful that her part in it was confined to the telling of it.

She had been with her uncle's family nearly three months now, and her father would hardly have recognized in the plump sun-burned romp, the pale fashionably dressed young lady who had bade him farewell on the steamer's deck, quite heart-broken at being exiled to the wild West, of which she knew so little.

One of the first things the cousins did, when the quarantine was raised, was to have their pictures taken in a group—Annette mounted on Tom's frisky "bronco," for under his careful teaching she had become quite an expert horsewoman; Tom himself in full foot-ball costume; Will with a tennis racquet; the Twins with their bats and balls; while Ted was posed with a gorgeous Indian bow and arrow.

"The Physical Culture Club," Annette wrote on the one she sent her father.

And so healthy, happy, and hearty did the little group look that Mr. Harold wrote his little girl, that if the German baths did not soon effect a cure he was coming home to join the Physical Culture Club.

When the days of quarantine were over, and the Littles free to mingle again with their small world, the young people decided to give a "picnic tea" to celebrate the happy event.

They were to ride out to the "Water Holes," a series of springs some eight miles from the post, have their tea, and return by the light of the new moon.

Lieutenant and Mrs. Brown were to chaperon them; while two of the soldiers drove out in the market-cart to carry the provisions and look after the horses.

A moonlight ride over the wide, level prairies, on ponies trained to avoid the prairie-dog holes, to run on the keen jump without fear of a stumble is glorious fun.

Annette had been out two or three times with her cousins, but to have a whole cavalcade to shout, to sing, to run races with, would be far jollier.

She had talked of nothing but the picnic for days before it came off, but when at last the happy time arrived Nan developed one of her perverse moods.

She was very provoking, and Tom felt thoroughly out of humor with his pretty cousin. Nothing suited her. Her stirrup was too long, then too short; the saddle was slipping, though Black Bess was "cinched" as tight as both Tom's and McGuire's combined efforts could pull her.

Black Bess seemed to be as perverse as her young mistress; but Tom rode steadily at Annette's side on the way to the picnic-spot, and when the pony's prancings and shying became uncomfortable to Nan, he would lay a strong hand on the reins, and with an occasional "Steady, steady, old girl," manage to quiet Mistress Bess.

But on reaching the picnic-grounds Tom quietly told the man in charge of the horses to put his saddle on Bess. Annette should not risk the ride home on a frisky

horse, that was certain. Unfortunately, Nan overheard the order, and secretly determined upon having her own way.

Apparently no one enjoyed the pleasant open-air tea more than Nan; she laughed, joked, and made the crowd of young people merry with her nonsense.

Tom paid no attention to her, but busied himself in attending to Elinor Deane's many wants.

Nan was an excellent mimic. Any peculiarity in speech or manner had heretofore been considered fair game, but she had soon discovered that Mrs. Little did not appreciate a talent that necessitated an uncharitable burlesquing of people's unfortunate peculiarities; and as for Tom, he fairly detested it.

Naughty Nan knew this: so it was to further provoke her "goody-goody" cousin that she commenced to mimic Miss Atkins, an elderly spinster sister of the colonel's, who on account of various feline qualities had been nick-named by the garrison as "The old Cat."

Will had found a tiny sand-lizard, which he was trying to induce to crawl into an empty bottle, but on hearing Nan begin a speech with an exact imitation of poor, soured Miss Atkins' high, thin voice, he dropped the lizard and bottle and, with youthful and perhaps indiscreet ardor, called out:

"I say, Nan, stop that! Mother hates you to do it—and you know it.'

"For goodness' sake! Will, don't you preach; *one*

in the family is enough. I shall amuse myself as I like. You can *tattle* if you like. I suppose I shan't be kept on bread and water more than three days for this particular crime," said this provoking girl.

"Tattle!" cried Will, furiously. "If you were a boy I'd make you take that back. You're a regular sneak, that's what you are, making fun of old Miss Atkins behind her back, and to-morrow you'll smile and kiss her. Mother was just right when she said you——"

But here a hand was laid peremptorily on his lips, and Tom said authoritatively: "Let up, youngster; what do you care?—it's only one of Nan's tantrums. Let her alone; getting mad won't do a bit of good." And Tom quietly led the younger boy off, and presently the two were seen hunting among the rocks for another lizard.

Annette flushed uneasily; she felt she had gone too far. Public opinion was evidently on Will's side. To recover her popularity she proposed a game of "Hide-and-seek," offering to be "it"; and soon the rocky sides of the cañon echoed with the merry shouts of the young people.

When Tom returned with the still ruffled Will, he found Nan coolly seated on *Bess*.

"Why, McGuire, didn't you hear me say that I——"

"Don't blame the man, Tom; I had the saddles changed. I rode Bess here, and I shall certainly ride her home."

"Goodness knows you've behaved like a simpleton

the whole evening; but your foolishness shan't endanger your life. I say you *shall not* ride Black Bess," began Tom, unwisely.

"And I say I *will*," returned the foolish girl with quick anger, giving Bess a sharp cut with her whip, which caused the already fretting animal to rear for one instant, then dash like mad across the level, open prairie.

"Quick, quick! after her," cried Tom, jumping on his own pony without waiting to saddle it; knowing it was vain for him, on his slow old "Brownie," to try to catch up with that rapidly vanishing speck.

But no one else was saddled up, and none of them felt like risking a dash over a trackless waste filled with prairie-dog holes, in the dim, uncertain light of a very new moon.

As for Will, his anger still burned fiercely towards the provoking girl, and he thought a good scare would do her good, and that she was getting what she richly deserved.

It seemed to Nan that she had been rushing like mad for hours; she wondered if Bess would ever tire. Just at first the sense of the rapid motion had been delightful, and she had felt sure that some one would soon catch up with her, but no one had; and, as she looked quickly backward, no one appeared in sight. Then for the first time she felt frightened. "Oh, dear! I wonder if we are riding in the right direction?" she half sobbed.

It seemed ages to the weary girl when at last Black Bess, covered with sweat and foam, ceased her mad run.

She had no idea where she was; faint and exhausted, she began to sob bitterly; the night wind on the plains is cold, and Nan soon felt chilled through. She thought she would feel warmer walking; so she slipped out of the saddle and, throwing the reins over her arm, wandered on aimlessly.

Suddenly a weird, moaning cry sounded from a clump of sage-brush, and a long, reddish-brown creature with bushy tail sneaked out.

It was only a cowardly coyote,* but it terrified the poor, city-bred child beyond measure.

Before her eyes came a sweet vision of peace and safety; the tender eyes of the "Mother of Sorrow" seemed to look down upon her loneliness with a loving, pitying smile.

Instinctively she paused and, clasping her hands, whispered softly: "O heavenly Mother! protect me; send some one to me, dear Mary, if you are my mother, as Aunt Mary says."

As the last word left her lips the faint beat of a horse's hoofs was heard. From that moment Nan never doubted the reality of Mary's love and power.

It was with a feeling of awe that she saw a tall, dark figure, seated in an open buggy, approaching.

"Whom have we here?" called a voice in mingled consternation and surprise.

* Pronounced on the plains *ky*-ote.

"It is I, Father Allen!" cried Nan, joyfully. "My horse ran away from the others, father, and I am lost. I am Annette Harold, Captain Little's niece." The explanation ended in a deep sob, which caused the good priest to jump from his buggy and, tenderly picking up the tired child, tuck her snugly up in the warm rugs, while Bess was rapidly tied to the rear of the wagon.

"Come, tell me all about it," said the priest cheerily, as he drove rapidly on.

When Nan had finished her long explanation, ending with an account of her little prayer——

"Our Blessed Lady! when does she fail to help those who appeal to her?" said the priest softly.

"Of course, Father Allen, you know I am not a *Romanist*—" began the girl.

"Yes, yes, I know. I have heard of the young lady who is a 'Catholic' but not a 'Romanist,'" he returned with a quizzical smile, which deepened into a frown.

"You may laugh, father, but I have always been taught to call myself a Catholic. Perhaps you do not quite understand——"

"I do, my poor child," interrupted the priest with a sad smile. "I was one of you for more than twenty years."

Nan gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Does it astonish you so much, child? Yes, for twenty years I was an Episcopalian, and ten of them a minister of that church. In my childhood I had a dear

old Catholic nurse who taught me a little prayer to Our Blessed Lady, who never fails those who ask her aid. I have always attributed my conversion to her—Hark! what is that?"

The report of cannon echoed over the prairie.

"That is for you, child; they are firing the cannon, so that the sound might be a guide to you. Come, Laddie, I must hurry you up," touching lightly the powerful bay; "this little girl is lost and her friends are troubled about her."

"How did you happen to be out so late?" asked Nan timidly.

"I have just taken the Viaticum to one who in life neglected his God; but His mercy is infinite now, as in His lifetime. Jesus comes to save sinners."

* * * * * *

It seemed as if the whole garrison was on the porch of "Quarters No. 10" as Father Allen and Nan drove up.

But the girl had eyes and ears for no one save her aunt. "Forgive me, auntie; I have been so bad and hateful," she cried; and vanished to sob out her story in Aunt Mary's forgiving arms, while Father Allen related her adventures to the group outside.

"Here, Will, run and tell the sergeant of the guard to fire the cannon twice in rapid succession," said the colonel. "Half the garrison are out looking for the child; and that was the signal agreed upon to let them know if she turned up all right," explained Colonel Atkins.

The next morning Nan assisted devoutly at High Mass, and at Benediction in the evening. As the lights were being put out, Mrs. Little saw the child slip up to the small side altar of the Blessed Virgin, and lay at the foot of the statue the bunch of roses she had been wearing, while with eyes uplifted to the loving face of the heavenly Mother she murmured some fervent petition.

Mrs. Little smiled, then sighed at the sweet sight. "Poor, little, wandering lamb!" she whispered softly. "O Good Shepherd! gather this little ewe lamb into Thy one true fold."

Then the last light went out, leaving the reverent, kneeling little figure in the shadow, save where the soft rose-colored rays from the sanctuary lamp fell like a benediction on the brown curls, bent in prayer.

CHAPTER VII.

LIGHT IS BREAKING.

It was the Saturday week following Annette's wild night ride. The elder boys had gone off swimming; it was entirely too hot for tennis; so Nan lay lazily in the hammock on the shady side-porch, thinking.

What a jolly, pleasant summer she had had; next to her own dear, dead mother, Aunt Mary was the sweetest, best woman she had ever known.

The boys, too, were such good fellows. Both Tom and Will were conscientious and high-minded beyond their years. Not a bit goody-goody either. The twins, though their exuberant spirits often got them into scrapes, were as sweet and innocent a pair of laddies as one would wish to meet.

As for Ted, the quaint darling, with his talk about heaven and the saints, he was already an angel. He had startled Annette very much one day by his earnest reply to her question whether he never got lonely? "Oh, no!" he had answered readily, "'cause I'se never alone. My Guardian Angel is following me 'round all the time."

Annette, quite unaccustomed to this mention of heavenly things in everyday life (her religion began and ended with Sunday), simply stared in dumb amazement at the odd little fellow.

However, she soon grew used to this "queer habit," as she mentally termed it, for Mrs. Little was an enthusiastic promoter in the League of the Sacred Heart, and Tom and Will were both members. At breakfast every day the "intention" for the day and the practice of some particular virtue was announced and if by some chance it was forgotten, Captain Little would remind them by asking, "Well, what are my four young sinners going to pray for to-day?"

Nan realized that this pleasant, unselfish family life, which she had been allowed to share, was different from anything she had been accustomed to.

"I wonder if it is their religion that does it? They are an awfully pious set; and that seems funny in boys," she mused. "Of course I know that our Lord lived on earth, had a mother, walked and talked just as we do; still somehow it doesn't seem as real to me as it does to auntie and the boys. Tom talks as if that beautiful young Saint Aloysius was just in the next room. 'My patron,' Tom calls him, as if he actually *loved* him the same as his brothers. As for the twins, they depend upon Saint Anthony as if he were their personal friend, and had nothing to do but help small boys find their missing property. I have always been taught to believe that this devotion to the Virgin and the saints was the principal part of the Roman Catholic religion. I know better now; it is not true" (with an emphatic nod of the curly brown head). "I never knew any people who loved God and tried to keep his commandments as Aunt Mary and her boys. The way they pray to the saints is very much the way I get the boys to ask favors of Aunt Mary for me, especially when I know I don't deserve them. God's friends, auntie calls the saints. I heard our minister say once that if we could only be certain the saints could *hear* our prayers, there would be no objection to our praying to them. One thing I *know*," and a look of reverent recollection stole over the thoughtful little face: "the mother of Jesus heard my prayer for help, and answered it, too, when I was lost the other night. Not all the ministers in the world could convince me that she did not.

"Then I love to think that Jesus is really on the altar. I just love Benediction; it seems like a bit of heaven come down on earth. Oh, dear! I am only a little girl, and very ignorant, too; still, if being a Catholic will make me half as sweet and good as dear auntie, I would be one to-morrow.

"There are the boys. What a racket they are making!" as a series of wild war-whoops were heard approaching.

Nan's reverie was broken in upon by the twins and Will, who clamored for something to eat.

But her afternoon's meditation made a serious impression upon her; and that night as she knelt in prayer she added a new petition to her usual daily ones.

"Dear heavenly Mother, pray for me that I may do what is right," she whispered softly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COOKING-CLUB.

THERE is no short road to perfection, and Nan did not become a saint, nor anything like one, in a day. Still, dating from her night-ride on the prairie, every one noticed a great change for the better.

"Oh! auntie dear, may I join the Cooking-Club?" cried Nan one morning, rushing into the kitchen where Mrs. Little was making cake.

"It's the loveliest plan. We are going to meet once a week. Then when we know how to cook well enough we will give a supper, cooked every bit by ourselves, for the boys."

Here she paused a moment for breath, giving Mrs. Little a chance to ask, "And who is to be the teacher, Nan?"

"Teacher?" answered Nan blankly. "We don't intend to have any; we are intelligent enough, *I hope*, to be able to follow a receipt-book we have—Miss Parloa's. A grown-up person, bossing around, would spoil all the fun."

Mrs. Little saw at once there would be no use in arguing the matter, and if she refused to let Nan join her young companions, she would be regarded as a stern tyrant. Still it was not that which decided her to grant the permission; she knew well that Nan's impulsive yet obstinate nature would learn best by experience. Only experience could discipline this little girl into acknowledging that her own way was not always best. So, amidst many jeers from the boys about "biscuit bullets," and "pies like my mother used to make," the Fort Sedgewick Cooking-Club was organized and held its first successful meeting at Bertha Tompkins'.

The proceedings were attended with great mystery and secrecy. Ted was the only boy initiated, and he was solemnly bound over not to reveal the culinary secrets at which he assisted.

Once during the afternoon the boys made a wild rush upon the kitchen; but the girls, hot, sticky, and generally dishevelled, met the onslaught with rolling-pins and big spoons, while Teddy danced wildly in the rear, yelling encouragement to his feminine allies: "Give it to 'em; give it to 'em, girls! There's Harry peeking. Oh! oh! Tom's crawling through the window;" for his dignified elder brother seemed to have left his dignity behind and was yelling wildly with the rest.

Nan reported at breakfast the next day that the meeting had been charming, and the supper, cooked entirely by their own hands, a great success. Whereupon Will quietly remarked, with a wicked little twinkle: "I suppose you hadn't much appetite at your supper then, for I saw you out in the pantry after 'Tattoo' getting away with a large quantity of bread and milk."

Nan flushed a little, but remarked airily: "O Will! you know cooks never have much of an appetite."

"You can't eat your own mess—that's what you mean," said Tom. "Then why don't you have us in to perform that necessary duty? Boys have stomachs like the traditional ostrich; why, Nan, boys can eat anything."

"Can they?" exclaimed little Ted eagerly. "Then why did you make me plomis not to eat a single fing, Momsy!" looking reproachfully at his mother, while the boys shouted in unison at the "dead give-away on Little Mother." Only Nan refused to see the joke.

"Laugh all you like; just wait until we give our swell supper. Boys that don't behave, and act rudely, will not be invited." This dreadful threat had the desired effect, and the boys, for that one day at least, were the very pink of politeness.

Mrs. Little, too, hastened to throw oil on the troubled waters: "It wasn't because I feared the result of your cooking on Ted, Nan, but because he is such a small gourmand, and eating between meals is not good for little boys, nor big ones either for that matter."

* * * * * *

It was well on in September before the Cooking-Club felt itself proficient to give the long-promised supper to the youthful gentlemen of the garrison. But finally dainty invitations, written in Nan's best hand, were sent around the garrison by the colonel's orderly, borrowed for the occasion, and every boy in the post was formally bidden to a "High Tea," at seven o'clock Thursday evening, at Captain Little's.

The boys were on tip-toe with expectation, and smacked their lips in lively anticipation of all the good things the girls were sure to have.

The few days preceding the party they were certainly on their best behavior; the girls were quite overwhelmed with attentions; invitations to tennis, for soda-water treats at the "Canteen," poured in upon them.

Even Will, opening his heart one day, offered to let the girls have a peep at his precious specimens; this was the best he could do.

As Nan remarked rather sarcastically: "We will give a supper once a week if this ecstatic state of affairs will only last."

The boys had ceased to shout at her every time she walked down the "Line" Tom's version of one of the popular songs of the day:

> "Have you seen Miss Nancy Nan,
> With her spoon and big cake-pan,
> Walking down to school to-day?
> Ta-ra-ra-ra boom de aye."

There was a great bustle and hurry in the big kitchen of "Quarters No. 10" that pleasant September afternoon; much talking and laughter from the merry young cooks, with an occasional crash of china and tins which boded ill for Mrs. Little's kitchen utensils.

Once Teddy had appeared with a dab of flour on his little nose to announce that the howls from the back yard came from poor "Tatters," the cat, for Nellie Barry had accidentally poured boiling bouillon on poor kitty's tail.

Mamma had kissed the flushed, eager little face, suggesting that Ted stay awhile with her and cool off, but the young man protested that he wasn't a bit hot. "And, O momsy, it is so escitin' in the kitchen; Nan put salt stid of sugar ——" but here mamma clapped her hands over her ears and cried merrily: "Oh, hush! Ted; you must not betray state secrets."

She smiled as Ted flew down the stairs, but at once went to work in the dining-room and butler's pantry

over something that occupied her the day before and all that day, too.

Delia was evidently in the secret, for she peeped in once to say: "Shure, mim, and it will all be needed—sech doin's."

Nora the cook had received a holiday, but Delia would have to wait on the table, so she had graciously been allowed to witness the methods of the Cooking-Club.

* * * * * *

Mrs. Little sat in her room upstairs—the sewing-room, she called it, where the pretty oratory stood; "Mother's room," the boys called it. Not a sound had reached her from the noisy young cooks for nearly half an hour.

She was wondering what the sudden silence meant, when suddenly poor Nan, flushed and half weeping, rushed into the room and threw herself beside her aunt, burying the tangled brown curls in Mrs. Little's lap while she sobbed out hysterically:

"O auntie! it's half-past six; the boys are coming at *seven;* nothing is ready; everything is a failure. I put sugar instead of salt in the bouillon. Nellie Barry has mixed the chicken salad with the chicken terrapin. Elinor used soda instead of baking-powder in her biscuit; Nora must have put the soda in a baking-powder can."

When Nan had unfolded her long tale of mishaps, with a final burst of tears she cried: "Oh! tell us what to do, auntie dear."

"Where are the girls, Nan?"

"Down in the kitchen, weeping."

"Run down quickly, and tell them I say to run home as fast as they can, put on their best gowns, bathe their red eyes, and be back here at five minutes before seven. And remember, they are not so much as by word or look to betray the dreadful mishaps of this afternoon. For the honor of our sex we must not let those teasing boys find out what has happened. Now off with you—fly!"

At seven o'clock the procession of boys was ushered into the parlor, where the six young hostesses, with faces still somewhat red from their recent exertions, sat with their backs turned carefully to the light; but this last circumstance the boys fortunately did not observe.

At five minutes past the hour the dining-room doors were thrown open by Delia, who announced that "Tea" was served. Teddy folded his little hands and slowly and reverently said grace.

How good everything tasted; the poor, tired young cooks thought that never had a supper tasted more delicious.

First came iced bouillon, in Mrs. Little's dainty Japanese cups. Then broiled white fish with cucumbers. Next came a course of chicken with cream sauce, in paté-cases. The salad course came next; ice-cold tomatoes, each nestling in a dainty bed of cool green lettuce-leaves and covered with thick-yellow mayonnaise.

Iced tea with sliced lemon, served in pretty thin punch glasses, had accompanied each course. When the dessert appeared, fresh peaches half frozen, with a great pitcher of thick cream to eat with them; while a huge pound-cake occupied the center of the tables, the boys gave an exclamation of delight, while Tom observed, eyeing the girls curiously, "Nan, I thought you said cooks never had any appetite for *their own cooking*. It strikes me that none of you have failed to enjoy every blessed thing on the table."

Here Teddy giggled, but was promptly suppressed with a pinch by Elinor Deane, who sat next him.

"Aunt Mary, how on earth did you ever do it?" whispered Nan as the last guest departed, escorted home by Tom.

"To tell the truth, dearie, I half feared just what did happen, so I had Nora prepare everything, and told her to be home at five minutes before seven. My supper was all prepared yesterday and this morning. I was afraid all afternoon some of you would stumble over the peaches packed away in salt and ice—and so learn my secret."

"You were right, Aunt Mary, about our needing to have a teacher," said Nan humbly, "and the girls all asked me to see if you would not come and show us the best way to do things. We've had an awful lesson to-day."

"No, Nan dear, I really haven't the time to spare for your club, but I have a suggestion to make. Get

Mrs. Ward, the little widow in the town whose husband so recently died. She is a splendid cook, and I am sure whatever sum you could afford to pay her for her lessons would be an acceptable addition to her small income."

In the end Mrs. Little's suggestion was adopted.

The boys wondered why the girls thought a teacher necessary when they were such fine cooks. But they never learned the real reason.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TWINS DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES.

THE twins had organized a secret society amongst the boys in the post of their own age. They went around muttering dark words and making mysterious signs and passes.

Each boy's mamma, however, was in the secret; Mac and Brian were too loyal to have any secret that Little Mother could not share. She worked the mysterious red letters S. B. B.—Sedgewick Blood Brothers—on their tennis shirts, and made the heavy bead rings that adorned the little finger of each member of the band.

They had various signs and passwords, but the most important signal was the "dropping of the ring" from off the finger. This meant that the Brother dropping

the ring was in serious danger and unable to call for help. Any one dropping the ring by way of a joke was to be publicly expelled from the society, and "cut" by all the members.

Teddy was wild with anxiety to join this fascinating society, and devoured with curiosity to learn their secrets; so his mother had to plan something for the little lad, who hated being left out by the "big fellows."

So she formed a secret society of two, herself and Ted, with a most delightful code of signals. For instance, if Teddy waved his cap once, that meant "Can I have a cookie?" Three waves of the handkerchief meant "Yes;" one wave "no;" but I must confess the three waves were always signalled back.

It was a broiling hot September afternoon, and all the members of the "S. B. B." had gone fishing save Mac and Brian, who had chosen this particular day to try their new bats and balls.

The "diamond" on which the enlisted men practised was quite near the "guard-house;" and here the two settled down for a hard afternoon's work. "Flies," "grounders," "swifts," all the possible balls were faithfully practised.

Mac had just made a dandy hit; the ball went sailing away towards the guard-house, and to Brian's dismay fell inside of a small circular ventilating window of the attic. The guard-house, as is usually the case, was only one story high, with a very low attic.

Mac gave vent to a loud howl of disgust—a brand new ball was entirely too valuable to lose.

Both boys started slowly towards the guard-house, discussing a plan to recover the lost treasure, when suddenly they saw the sergeant of the guard run out on the porch and call excitedly to "No. One"—that is, the sentry walking post in front of the guard-house; instantly the sentinel ran forward a few feet and fired his piece.

"Fire!" exclaimed the twins simultaneously, and they started on a mad run to see where it was. Their father's company, "G," was the hook and ladder company, and the little boys felt privileged to run with it.

In a garrison when a sentry fires his piece as an alarm of fire it is quickly followed by "fire call," and every company bugler seems to see which can sound the call loudest and quickest; they usually make a fearful din. And when the buglers did not appear, he boys paused, while Brian gasped "'Tain't a fire, Mac; it must be a *deserter!*" Both lads turned short and retraced their steps to the guard-house.

The officer of the day, Lieutenant Morrow, buckling on his sword as he ran, was making for the same spot.

The walk that runs in front of the officers' quarters, always spoken of in military circles as "the line," was crowded with women and children, all sure it must be their house on fire.

In the meantime there were lively times over at the guard, everybody talking and explaining at once, until the officer of the day made his appearance and restored order. He soon elicited the facts from the now hysterical sergeant of the guard, who was responsible for the safe-keeping of the prisoners. A military convict, awaiting trial for attempted murder, had made his escape. The man was a powerful and desperate villain, who was never allowed to leave the guard-house without a special sentry over him. Altogether it was a most mysterious and extraordinary affair; the man had deserted, he was gone, there was no doubt of it; but *how* had he gone?

How could he, with heavy steel shackles on, have walked out in broad daylight? when to do so he must pass all the members of the guard, old and trustworthy soldiers most of them, and the sentry's beat extended not more than ten feet on either side of the guard-house porch. The prisoner had last been seen at "fatigue call," one o'clock, when some one went in to get his dinner dishes. It was now three.

"He cannot have gotten very far away, even if he's had a three hours' start, for he certainly took his shackles with him," remarked Lieutenant Morrow. "We will organize two or three search parties and find the fellow hiding up in the cañon, no doubt."

Twenty minutes later found the greater part of the young men of the post, with a few of the older boys,

Tom Little among them, actively engaged upon a hunt for the deserter.

Some in the ambulance, with long-distance field-glasses, had driven up the trail on the main "Divide," but most of them were on horseback and scouring the prairie in every direction.

Mac and Brian had, of course, been crazy to go, but their father had very peremptorily bade them stay at home. "It was no place for little boys," he had said.

Nan was wild with excitement; she would have liked to have mounted Bess well enough, and gone with the others in pursuit of the deserter.

"Such perfectly fascinating, exciting things do happen in army life," sighed Nan; "I am sure the girls will never believe one-half I will have to tell them when I go back to New York."

"Such exciting events as the Cooking-club supper," suggested Mrs. Little demurely.

The other half of Mrs. Little's Secret Society caused a welcome diversion just at that moment by waving his small cap frantically from the other end of the parade ground.

"Bless the boy! that is the third cookie signal inside of two hours," said Mrs. Little, waving with the napkin she was hemming, the expected answer "Yes."

"Run to the cookie-box, Nan; I'll stand treat all round."

As the twins stood munching their favorite delicacy

they suddenly remembered the lost ball, and started over to the guard-house determined to recover it.

Getting permission from the corporal of the guard, they stood the short fire-ladder against the side wall, and Mac ran lightly up it and disappeared through the small opening where the ball had gone in.

"Don't be all day about it!" shouted Brian impatiently, as Mac did not make his appearance. "What on earth is keeping you so long?"

At that instant a small familiar brown hand reached quickly out and deliberately dropped the beaded ring! —then instantly vanished, while not a sound was heard.

Brian's heart gave a terrific thump; it seemed to lodge right in his throat.

Could Mac be playing a joke? No, it was not one bit like steady Mac; besides who ever heard of one twin playing a joke on the other?

But what possible danger *could* there be in that attic!

Without further hesitation Brian ran into the guard-house and told his story to the corporal. Now, the corporal was a keen, ambitious youngster, working hard for his sergeant's chevrons. Instantly the whole plot flashed upon him.

"Not a word, Brian," he whispered as he took his big army pistol from its holster, and saw that it was ready for use—"but if I'm not mistaken, Mac has *tackled the convict.*"

Noiselessly placing the table in the center of the

guard-room directly under the trap-door which opened into the attic for the purpose of ventilation, and through which the prisoner *must* have made his escape, he softly let the door drop, then with a quick spring he was up through the narrow opening, and almost instantly Brian heard his voice, loud and stern, say:

"Throw up your hands, Stockton; the game is up—I have you covered! If you've hurt a hair on that kid's head, it'll go hard on you."

The "reliefs" came tumbling in from the porch, to seize the deserter; one of them, however, at the first sound of the corporal's ringing command had thrown down his side arms and rifle and disappeared. It was discovered afterwards that he had been an accomplice, and it was by his assistance that the prisoner had managed to hide in the attic, whence he had planned to effect his escape at night. He had already filed his shackles so they had come off without any difficulty.

The twins were certainly the heroes of the post, and were made to tell their story over and over.

Mac said that as soon as he dropped inside the window he felt himself seized, while a voice whispered that if he made a movement, uttered a sound, or tried to escape he would be killed.

The boy instantly recognized his assailant. He was awfully frightened; then he thought of his ring. Here, surely, was the time to use it.

The convict motioned him to lie down. While

apparently trying to obey him Mac managed, as if by accident, to stumble against the window and had hurriedly let the ring drop, entirely unnoticed by the convict, who was eyeing him savagely, looking at him as if he would like to choke him for interfering with his plans, and was only prevented from attempting to do so for fear of the noise the victim would make.

Mac confessed with a grin that it was not a very cheerful time.

"What did you do, Mac, while you were waiting to be rescued?" asked the colonel.

"Said my prayers, sir."

"Right, my boy!" answered the gallant old colonel heartily.

"But now, boys, I should like to know the name of this wonderful society that has done such good work to-day."

But not even the colonel could persuade them to divulge the secrets of the "S. B. B."

CHAPTER X.

TOM'S CROSS.

COLLEGE opened the first week in October, and Tom was making great preparations for his second term. His father had the promise of a West Point appointment for him in two years, so naturally he was

anxious to make the most of his time at college. It was the last week in September, and such glorious weather.

Nan had become perfectly tireless in the saddle; she and Tom would ride for miles over the level plains stretching away into the horizon, broken only occasionally by a clump of grease-wood and sage-brush, while off to the north a rocky cañon led by a gradual ascent up the big "Divide," over which ran the old "Cheyenne" trail, much used by those Indians on their semi-annual trading visits, before a paternal government transported them to the Indian Territory.

It was a fascinating country over which to ride. No barbed wire fences barred the way; no irate farmers to scold for gates left open or fields torn up. Only the prairie dogs sat up on their small mounds and barked furiously as the children flew by.

Occasionally they would start up a jack-rabbit, and then would ensue a few minutes' lively fun. They had no dogs to chase with, but the sturdy little cow ponies were quite used to the sport and enjoyed it hugely. Perhaps Nan enjoyed it all the better that the rabbit always got safely away.

"Tom," said Nan as they were returning to the garrison from one of their numerous farewell rides, "I can't half tell you how much I shall miss you; but if papa comes home next month I suppose I shall be starting to school myself."

"Mother will miss you like anything, Nan; a girl in the house is such a comfort."

"Oh!" replied Nan, smiling and dimpling at the evident sincerity of the boyish compliment, "do you really think so, Tom? Being with you all this summer has done me lots of good. I mean to try hard to grow up like Aunt Mary. I know now what an awfully selfish girl I've been, never thinking of any one but myself."

"Oh! I say, Nan, you're too hard on yourself."

"Not a bit of it, Tom," facing her cousin suddenly. "Do you think religions are *much* help? Do they really help to make one good and patient and unselfish?"

"Mine does," answered Tom stoutly, although he looked red and uncomfortable over the turn the conversation had taken. He *hated* talking about religious matters with any one but the mother; most boys do.

"I've got a beastly temper, and the pride of Lucifer."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Nan, wondering at the humility which made such a confession possible. "Why, Tom, I've never noticed either of them!"

"Perhaps not, little cousin. The only way for me is to go off and have my tussle out with Satan all alone."

"I should think you would just hate telling your sins in confession."

"I do," said Tom honestly. "The twins say they feel ill before they go into confession, but heavenly when they come out; and that just expresses my sentiments exactly."

"It must be *awful!*" shuddered the poor little ignoramus.

* * * * * *

"The Board" of cavalry officers out on a purchasing expedition had just sent in a dozen or so new "mounts," and the instructors in riding, several stalwart young cavalry sergeants, were giving them a little preliminary drill down at the coral. Tom and some of the other boys were interested spectators of the exciting scene.

The very first lesson taught a cavalry horse is the use of the reins. He must learn to be "bridle-wise;" that is, he must understand that he is to move to the right when the reins are laid over the right side of the neck, and *vice-versa.*

A civilian guides his horse to the right by pulling the right rein; a soldier or a cowboy by laying it over the horse's neck. And both soldier and cowboy regard a horse that is not bridle-wise with the greatest contempt —a "tenderfoot" they call him.

There was one wicked-looking sorrel that had thrown Corporal Davis three times, and he was without a doubt one of the best riders in the troop.

The third time he "bit the dust" Tom and the other boys jeered at him. His face flushed angrily, and he called out: "Come try this beast yourself, Tom Little; see if you can do any better, you are always bragging so about your riding."

Tom hesitated; his quick temper and his pride, which

would never let him decline a "dare," no matter how foolish, both tempted him. Conscience whispered that it would be disobedience in the spirit, if not in the letter, of his father's commands.

"Afraid, eh!" sneered the corporal; "them who brag most do the least."

Every one laughed, and Tom, with an angry light in his eyes vaulted the rail fence, and, without condescending to notice the corporal's warnings and instructions, with a quick spring was in the saddle before the horse had time to know his intention.

Plunging, kicking, rearing, the vicious animal flew madly around the corral, bent upon unseating his determined rider.

Tom *was* a splendid rider; he kept his seat perfectly, and all would have gone well but that Harry Wynn caught sight of the officer of the day coming to inspect the cavalry stables.

"Hi, Tom, look! old Grumpy is coming;" this being the disrespectful name given to old Captain Barnes, who always reported any unlawful deeds of the youthful members of the garrison with great satisfaction.

Tom turned to gaze upon the advance of the enemy; for one fatal instant he loosened his grip. With a bound the sorrel, with head lowered, legs stiff, had jumped several feet straight up in the air; he came down as if his legs were made of cast-iron, and luckless Tom shot over his head and was thrown heavily against the big gate-posts. Everything went black before him,

and he knew nothing more until, opening his eyes with a groan, he felt the doctor poking his ribs and saying:

"He's smashed his left arm and there are three broken ribs. Harvey, you go to the hospital and tell them to bring a stretcher here; you, Jack, run on and prepare Mrs. Little, so she will not be scared to death."

Mrs. Little had gone down to the village marketing. There was no one in the house save Nan and the servants, and they were of no use in an emergency, both declaring the sight of blood would make them faint—evidently expecting to see Tom brought home a mangled corpse.

Nan flew about with tearful eyes, but with such energy that by the time the ghastly-looking "stretcher" reached the house she had Tom's iron cot moved downstairs in the "den," knowing it would be hard to get Tom up the narrow, winding staircase without hurting him dreadfully.

"Capital, Miss Nan!" complimented the doctor. "Mrs. Little herself could not have done better;" an opinion Mrs. Little shared when, an hour later, she returned to find "No. 10" turned into a hospital, with fly-away Nan established as chief nurse.

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Tom spent a hard ten minutes while he confessed his disobedience to Little Mother, and what it would cost him. No starting back to school, the doctor had said, for six weeks or two months; his arm was in pretty bad shape.

Mrs. Little uttered no reproaches; she saw that Tom was repenting keenly his disobedient folly, and it was no time for scolding. "That was one thing about the mother," her lads would say: "she never hit a fellow when he was down." So now, when her big boy had sobbed out his trouble, she put both arms around him, and drew the rough brown head close while she whispered:

"It *is* hard, Tom; but now that this cross has come to you bear it patiently, bravely, and He who carried his cross to Calvary will comfort and aid you. Offer up to the Sacred Heart your disappointment at not being able to return to college. The least thing we do for Him, Tom dear, will not go unrewarded."

"I will, mother dear," responded the invalid humbly.

Mother did not often preach, but when she did her boys thought her little sermons just the thing. "They hit a fellow just right," as Tom explained.

Captain Little looked very grave when Tom explained the cause of the accident, and his simple comment of "I thought I could trust my boy better than that" hurt Tom more than a dozen scoldings.

"I'm awfully ashamed and sorry, sir," he began when his father interrupted him with——

"Well, then, *prove* it, Tom; keep on with your studies, and I will hear you every evening."

"Thank you, sir; I know I don't deserve it," said poor Tom gratefully. "I'll study my very best."

And so it was settled, and Tom found that love and sympathy made the burden light, while the knowledge that he was bearing his cross patiently in imitation of his Divine Lord made the pain of the broken bones easier to stand.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LIGHT COMES.

NAN was certainly a ministering angel during Tom's convalescence; with sweet and *new* unselfishness she tried in every way to lessen Mrs. Little's cares.

A great, though secret change had taken place in the young girl's heart; for some time she had been praying fervently to the Sacred Heart for guidance. Daily her petitions had ascended to her heavenly Mother for grace to do what was right.

Her father had written, in answer to her question as to whether he would object to her becoming a Romanist, that he was delighted at the prospect of her becoming a *real* Catholic, if she thought it best.

Running joyfully into Mrs. Little's room, fluttering the open letter, Nan exclaimed excitedly: "Aunt Mary, I'm going to be baptized. Papa says I may."

Mrs. Little said nothing: only looked grave. Nan was greatly disappointed. Like many others, she imagined that Catholics were always overjoyed to receive

a convert; therefore she expected a great fuss to be made over her as soon as she announced her intentions.

She really fancied, poor foolish child! that she, Annette Harold, only child and heiress of the wealthy banker's millions, was conferring an honor upon God's Holy Church by enrolling herself amongst its members.

But after a half-hour's talk with her aunt she emerged with quite a solemn look upon her merry face. This thing of being a Catholic meant a good deal more than just saying so.

The twins were members of Father Allen's First Communion class, and Nan joined it to receive instruction, as well as to prepare to receive her Lord. She was very eager to make her First Communion, saying she had several years of neglect to repair. She studied her catechism hard, and listened humbly to the father's instructions before giving her conditional baptism.

The priest had decided upon the feast of "All Saints" for the day of their First Communion. He had many First Communion classes at his different missions, so he was obliged to arrange it that they might not all come together.

Annette had been made very happy by a kind letter from her father.

"I have just been to the pretty old village church to witness the children's First Communion," he wrote, "and a lovely and touching sight it was: the flaxen-

haired, blue-eyed Gretchens, with their white gowns and floating veils, all looking so solemn yet happy; the tow-headed Hanses, with neat dark suits, white gloves and ties, and broad streamers of white ribbon floating from their left arms. And both girls and boys with an air of love and reverence that greatly impressed me.

"I write at length, so that my little daughter may know that her papa will be with her in heart and thought on the great day, though separated by so many thousand miles. I enclose a check for the pretty white gown, veil, and other necessaries."

The check was for so large an amount that Nan uttered an exclamation of joy.

"What is it, dear?" asked Aunt Mary, smiling at the girl's pleasure.

"Papa has been so generous; see how much money he has sent to buy my First Communion dress. I shall not need a third of it; and I have so wanted to do two things: First, I shall send to Omaha for enough flowers to cover the altar. When our Lord is going to give me so much, I want to do some little thing for Him. Then, Aunt Mary, there are those two poor McManey children, from Laundress Row; they were not at catechism yesterday, and Elinor Deane told me they were not going to make their First Communion with us, because they could not afford the new clothes. This (waving the check) happily will buy all they need."

"Sweet and generous thoughts, little niece," replied her aunt, thinking meantime what a great change for

the better had come over this child. "No one can love the Sacred Heart," she mused, "without reflecting, if ever so little, the light of generous, patient love shining there; it casts a glow upon even the humblest of His followers."

"I will not forestall your pleasure in adorning with sweet flowers our Lord's dwelling-place, and you may give Mary her outfit; but the twins have already emptied their savings-banks and asked me to get Dan's clothes just like theirs—they do not want any one to know, so do not speak of it—God bless my dear little lads!" she whispered with a little break in her voice. This sweet spontaneous act of charity on the part of her two "Irrepressibles," as she often called the twins, had touched her deeply.

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The children went into a three days' "Retreat," all going to confession the eve of the great day; when Nan came back from the church she went in to bid Tom good-night. She looked so positively beatific that Tom, remembering a certain conversation they had had once on the subject of confession, said mischievously: "It wasn't so *awful* after all, was it, Nan?"

"Yes, it was at first, Tom, and I was dreadfully scared too; but Father Allen is so good and kind, and now that it is over with I feel so happy and light-hearted, I could sing and dance for very joy."

"Yes, I know," answered Tom sympathetically. "I've been there myself. But you'll be happier still

to-morrow. The doctor has given me permission to hobble up to the chapel on my crutches, and I wouldn't miss it for anything in the world."

The old sun never shone upon a lovelier sight than those twelve young communicants at the altar-rails.

The old gray stone chapel had been decked by loving hands, as if for a marriage feast, and surely it was one—the union of youth and innocence with Love Divine.

The Mass was a low one, but all during it the choir sang sweet English hymns of joy and praise. And when, after the Consecration, Lieutenant Powers, the tenor, sang with exquisite feeling the "O Salutaris" there was not a dry eye in the church.

Father Allen's voice trembled as he pronounced the "Domine, non sum dignus." But it was with a feeling of exultant joy that he gave to these precious little ones of the Master the "Bread of Life," the "Food of Angels."

"It *was* a beautiful sight; so affecting too," remarked Mrs. Harris to her friend Mrs. Thorp, both non-Catholics. "But did you notice one thing? Annette Harold's gown and veil were not one bit better than that laundress child's Mary McManey; they looked as if they had come out of the same box."

"Yes, I did notice it, and wondered that Mrs. Little would allow it. But then the McManey boy had on a suit exactly like those of the twins."

Nan did not hear these criticisms; but she would

not have minded at all, for she was already learning the lessons of her Divine Master, who says to his faithful disciples, "Come learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

CHAPTER XII.

A DOLEFUL THANKSGIVING.

THERE was an added sweetness in Annette's face and a new light in the brown eyes since the happy day of her First Communion.

Our "song-bird," Uncle Fritz re-christened her, for the child made the house gay with sweet bursts of melody—singing her sweet, old-fashioned hymns as she went about her daily tasks, not only willingly but as if they were a pleasure.

"Aunt Mary, I am so happy," she would say a dozen times a day, popping her head in Mrs. Little's room just for a moment.

Tom's broken bones had healed nicely; he was to start back to college right after Thanksgiving.

Will and the twins were hard at work at the school in the village near by; while Ted recited his lessons to "his Nannie," who was so patient with him that he forgot to hate them.

Nan expected her father home by Thanksgiving. He was to come for her, and after the Thanksgiving

holidays they, with Tom, were to go East, where Nan was to enter a convent school.

"I think we may count on a quiet winter," remarked Mrs. Little to her flock, as they sat in front of the glowing, open fire listening to the wind howling outside, and the soft flurry of the snow as it beat against the windows.

"We have certainly had rather a lively summer. I am afraid Nan will find convent life rather quiet after the hurly-burly of the Little family."

"Well, auntie, at least there will be no rattlesnakes, crazy Indians, and fleeing deserters to interfere with my studies," laughingly answered Nan.

"The Thanksgiving turkey is so fat now he'll bust before he's killed," said the twins suddenly, and in one breath. Everybody laughed; apparently these two even thought in unison.

"Why so quiet, Fritz?" asked Mrs. Little of her husband, who sat rather soberly reading yesterday's daily paper which had come in the evening mail.

"I was just wondering, my dear, whether I'd be here to help eat that big turkey."

"Do you really think the Indians will give serious trouble this winter, Fritz?" Mrs. Little questioned, looking anxious; "why I thought they never broke out until spring."

"As a rule they do not; but matters seem to be in a pretty bad way. The Indians claim they are starving, and then 'Running Bull,' the great and influential Brulé

chief, announces to his people that the 'Indian Messiah' has again appeared to him, saying that if the Indians will only dance long enough, the Great Spirit will give them power to kill all white men, and the guns of the soldiers will have no power to kill. Here is a full account of it in the *Bee.*"

"I thought you never placed much reliance on newspaper stories, dear," said Mrs. Little.

"Neither do I, but this account happens to coincide with the report from Department Headquarters received this morning. The colonel has received telegraphic instructions to have this command in readiness for field duty at a moment's notice."

"O Fritz! and you never told me," cried Mrs. Little reproachfully.

"Why should I? My mess-kit is ready, my field-chest packed. Tom helped me with it, and we did not want to worry the Little Mother unnecessarily, did we, lads?"

But Mrs. Little had buried her face in Ted's golden curls, and made no reply.

Nan looked at the little group with wondering, fearful eyes. An Indian war in the abstract was rather a vague and fascinating affair; but for one's father to be obliged to go and *actually fight*—ah! that was terrible. Army life wasn't all play, after all.

A sharp ring at the bell disturbed the silence that had fallen upon them all; the twins rushed to answer it.

"The commandin' officer's compliments to Captain

Little, and will he report at the colonel's quarters? We're ordered in the field, an' our cars is bein' run in now to the quartermaster's office, b'ys." The first part of the orderly's speech was an official message, but the latter information was imparted to the boys as a most exciting piece of news too good to be kept. Every word had been heard by the group by the fireside.

By one o'clock the entire command, save one officer and a few men to do guard duty and run the post, was off to the scene of the trouble.

In the darkness and cold, without even the band to cheer them up with the lively tune of "The Girl I Left Behind Me," the troops marched down to the small station, looking grim and determined, for the wires had brought the news of a terrible massacre, of murdered women and children, of burned homes and fleeing settlers.

Captain Little had only a moment to spare for his farewells to his dear ones.

"Tom, my boy, will you give up returning to college until I get back? You can study here at home, and I shall feel better to think that mother has you to depend upon."

"Willingly, father," returned Tom, wringing his father's hand; "trust me, I'll look after them all."

Then, with a tender kiss for all, the captain was off to join his men.

The children sat and stared at each other as if in a

dream; it had all happened so quickly they could not yet realize it.

Mrs. Little had quietly slipped away to her room, where on her knees she was recommending to the Divine protection that dear husband.

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"It never rains but it pours!" exclaimed Nan at the breakfast table next morning, with a half-sob. "Papa writes that he has been detained, and cannot possibly get back before Christmas. Read what he says, auntie," handing her letter to Mrs. Little.

"I am very sorry for your disappointment, dear, but glad to know I can keep my little girl with me awhile longer."

"I love to stay here with you all, but I am so home-sick for papa. Oh, dear! I feel as if I just *couldn't* wait."

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News from the front continued to be cheerful, and the little garrison of women and children settled down to their monotonous life, only rousing into life when some particularly wild Indian rumor would be started.

It was just three days before Thanksgiving; the big turkey hung dressed and ready for the oven from the store-room rafters, a sight beautiful to behold.

Teddy wished a dozen times a day they could send him to papa, who was living on bacon and hard tack, and what stores the commissary could get to them.

"A splendid, long letter from papa, chicks," said

Mrs. Little cheerily, "with a kiss and a message apiece."

"He says, 'Tell Tom I am proud to think he is such a comfort to his mother; and Will, that he is so faithful about school, and in helping his younger brothers; as for the twins, a little bird tells me they have not missed once feeding the chickens and turkeys, no matter how cold; and this same little bird has whispered that Teddy is so good about learning his lessons, and the young teacher so sweet and patient in hearing them, that both deserve a reward of merit."

The children were delighted with their messages.

"Mine is best of all," continued Mrs. Little happily, and she read: "I really think the worst is over. The Indians seem sullen, but see how foolish it is to resist the odds against them. Small bands are coming in, and laying down their arms every day now. I think I am safe in saying, unless something unforeseen should happen, that a few weeks will see our command home again."

Hardly had she finished the last word when the sound of confused sobbing, excited talking and exclamations reached them. Mrs. Little turned pale and rose to see what the trouble was; as she did so the front door was thrown open violently and a dozen frightened and excited ladies called out wildly: "Oh! Mrs. Little, have you heard the news? There has been a fight; our battalion was engaged, and one officer has been killed and one fatally wounded, and we don't know who they are."

"Not my Jack, I feel sure; he is so young and brave, God will not take him," murmured little Mrs. Haines, the bride of the regiment.

Mr. Barnes, the young officer left in charge, stood at the open door and beckoned Mrs. Little out.

"Mrs. Little, your husband is wounded and wants you to come to him at once," he said slowly, with a half-sob in his young voice; "they've taken him to the sisters at Pine Ridge.

"It is poor Jack that is killed. Will you break it to Mrs. Haines? Poor little woman, I tried to, but I could not do it."

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It was a very doleful little group that sat down to the dinner-table that gloomy 30th of November.

Tom, looking very manly, was in his father's place, carefully looking after the wants of the younger ones; but no one had any appetite; they were too sorrowful to eat.

"This turkey will do for our Christmas dinner, too, if you do not eat any more than this," said Nan, trying to cheer them up a bit. But Tom only looked reproachfully at her, and remarked gloomily: "Dear knows where we'll be by that time."

"Right here, with dear uncle safe and well at home," replied Nan, determined not to give way.

"Well I don't know; things look very gloomy; I'm sure we haven't much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving."

"O Tom! think a minute——" Nan was beginning, when the door-bell rang and Delia brought in the dreaded yellow envelope.

Tom turned quite white and sick. "I can't open it, Nan," he groaned, hiding his face in his hands.

Nan's fingers trembled and her heart was faint with fear as she slowly tore open the telegram. Her face changed rapidly as she glanced at the short message.

"Good news, good news!" she cried, wildly delighted. "Just listen; it's from auntie: 'Father is better. Doctors say he will recover. He bids you be cheerful and sends love to all.'"

So the Thanksgiving dinner, for all it had begun so gloomily, ended right merrily in renewed hope, and grateful thanks that the life of the dear father was spared.

CHAPTER XIII.

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

THE second week in December the troops returned to Fort Sedgewick, to receive a perfect ovation. The long train carrying the "Command" came in the post about eleven o'clock in the morning; the companies were marched to the center of the parade ground, and there dismissed.

With wild hurrahs the men ran to their respective barracks; while the married men, officers and soldiers

alike, were overwhelmed with demonstrations of joy, seemingly not minding in the least being hugged and kissed right on the parade ground.

As soon as a little order was restored in the joyfully excited community, the colonel's wife, in the name of all the ladies, asked the returned warriors to meet at her house in about an hour for luncheon.

The kind old colonel saw the wistful group on the porch of Captain Little's quarters, looking with longing eyes at this glad exchange of greeting in which they had no part; and he stopped a moment to say cheerily:

"All of you report at my quarters at one o'clock sharp, and don't eat your luncheon before you come. I had a telegram from Pine Ridge this morning; your father is getting along splendidly, we shall have him with us by Christmas."

It was a pretty and significant scene that Nan saw, as the white-gloved orderly ushered her into the parlor at the Colonel's. The long table in the dining-room was set with the finest glass and silver in the garrison, every one contributing her very best—while at the table, still in their rough field rig, sat the officers, the ladies waiting upon them, each one intent upon seing that her own particular hero was not overlooked.

A vacant seat at the colonel's left, with a battered forage-cap lying at the empty place, was a silent but eloquent reminder of the brother officer who had answered to the soldier's last roll call.

Another seat to the colonel's right was also empty.

"Come here, Ted, and fill your father's place," called the Colonel. "We've elected you to represent the Little family, as there wasn't room for you all."

Ted retired shyly behind Nan's shoulder, but was soon persuaded to occupy the seat of honor, where he kept the ladies busy attending to his many wants.

After the big people had finished, the young ones were invited out to the dining-room, and a merry time they had of it.

"It would have been simply perfect, wouldn't it, Tom," whispered Nan, "if only we could have had our fathers here, too?"

"Yes," he replied gruffly, but with a little quiver of emotion in his voice, which he tried in vain to control. For the thought that his father might have been lying with poor Lieutenant Haines had been near to upsetting him every time he looked at the vacant seat. Never again, no matter what the future might bring, would he say or think even that he had nothing to be grateful for.

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Christmas eve; and a regular old-fashioned Christmas too—for the old fort was covered with a thick mantle of snow. The sentries, clad in huge buffalo coats with fur caps and gloves, walked briskly up and down their respective beats.

The moon just appearing from behind the Divide, made the whole scene as plain as day to Nan's delighted eyes, as she peered out from behind the shelter of the heavy curtains.

"Please, Miss Nan," said Delia, appearing with a huge bundle of toys, "the men of the company send these for Mac and Brian and Ted, with best wishes for a Merry Christmas."

"How lovely of them!" cried Nan.

"They always do it," said Tom. "Will and I used to get them when we were little chaps. Of course it's for father's sake they do it. The men would go through fire and water for him. They can't make father presents, so they always remember the children at Christmas."

"Ta-ra-ra-ra-ra," sang a bugle. "Tattoo!" exclaimed Nan. "Come, Tom, we must finish this tree and get to bed if we want to wake up in time for the five o'clock mass.

Three long black stockings, owned by the twins and Teddy, adorned the parlor mantel; over his Teddy had printed in big capitals—"I am *Teddy*, dear Santy Claws, *not* the twins."

"Isn't Ted a darling?" asked Nan, as she and Tom deftly strung the tall tree with the glittering objects which went to make its beauty.

"He doesn't wish old Santa to make any mistakes," laughed Tom.

Mrs. Little had written that they were to prepare for Christmas just the same as if she were at home, as the doctors could not say positively when the dear invalid could be moved with safety.

She had sent them a check to buy their usual gifts; then had added mysteriously:

"My two principal gifts will not arrive until Christmas eve, on the eleven o'clock train. It has been quite impossible to get them there sooner, but I particularly wish that you do not go down to the express-office for them, as I have made the necessary arrangements to have them brought at once to the house."

"I had so counted upon papa's getting here for Christmas," Nan was saying as she fastened a gaudy butterfly to a high branch—"but I did not even get a letter by the last steamer."

"It'll get here by the next," responded Tom cheerfully. "It's some business that has caused the delay."

"That doesn't make it any the easier to bear," Nan said, rather huffishly, for Tom had not been very sympathetic.

"I wonder what on earth will be in those boxes," answered Tom, anxious to turn the conversation before Nan was reduced to tears. She instantly fell into the trap and replied eagerly:

"I am just crazy to know, and Ted stayed awake half an hour guessing all the impossible things imaginable, from a cart and pony to a gold watch.

"There, the tree is finished at last. Isn't it a beauty? It does not need another thing. Now fix the angel up on top so he will look as though he were flying, then we can sit down and rest until train-time."

Nan, curled up on the sofa, had dropped off into a most delightful doze; and Tom was nodding sleepily behind his book, so that neither heard the slight

bustle of an arrival as the wagon drove up to the house.

Tom dropped his book with a bang, and Nan started wildly to her feet, as voices familiarly dear to each exclaimed:

"Where are my boys?" and "Where's my little girl?" And Nan found herself clasped close to her father's heart, while Tom, great, tall lad that he was, had thrown both arms around his father's neck crying with boyish love and pride:

"Oh! dear father, I am so glad to see you, and so proud of you; let me take your crutches; lean on me, sir."

It was a joyful moment for all; and Mrs. Little, from amidst the piles of luggage, called out merrily:

"Well, young people, how do you like my two principal gifts!"

"This is why you said we were not to go to the train," and "This is why I got no letter in the last mail," exclaimed Tom and Nan in one breath.

By this time the talking and laughing roused Will and the twins; and as they hung in silent joy around their father's chair, Ted in his little nightgown, half asleep, made his appearance and was soon cuddled close in his father's arms.

It was twelve o'clock before Mrs. Little got her little flock off to bed for the night; but the threat that Santa Claus might come, and, finding everybody awake, drive on, sent the children scampering off and the elders soon followed suit.

A very happy and merry time followed; the days seemed to fly away, and when at last the holidays were over, and the day of departure came for Mr. Harold, Nan and Tom, there was universal woe in the family.

The ambulance stood waiting to take them to the depot; but Nan, in tears, clung to her auntie crying dolefully, with the twins sniffling in the background, while Teddie clutched her skirts determinedly as if he would prevent her moving.

Mrs. Little's own eyes filled with tears as she kissed the young girl for the last time.

"I shall miss my little daughter more than I can say," she whispered fondly, "but your father has promised to let me have you every vacation, and to come himself part of the time."

It was this assurance that sent Nan off smiling in the midst of her tears, and enabled her to respond to the vigorous farewells, waved with sheets, towels, anything *big*, in fact, from every window in "Quarters No. 10," until the wagon was entirely out of sight.

HOW POLLY WAS LOST.

IT was a very hot morning, and mamma sat at her pretty desk, surrounded by a pile of housekeeping books, making up her accounts. It was very absorbing, and Polly, who was playing very happily with her old black Dinah, found she could get no answer to her frequent questions.

"Please, mamma, may I have your 'mellin' salts?"

"Twenty-six and eight are thirty-two—no, no, thirty-four," replies mamma.

"Please, dearie"—Polly's pet name for her mamma—"tan't I powder Dinah, she's so awful hot?"

No answer at all this time, so Polly resolved to take the law in her own hands.

Half an hour later nurse comes in to take Polly out for her morning's play—out on the big, shady parade ground of old Fort Warren, where the big cannons which stand on either side of the tall flagstaff, shaded by huge, old elms, make the most delightful play-ground imaginable.

"Isn't Polly with you, ma'am?" says nurse.

"She was here a moment ago, nurse," answered Mrs. Cameron.

"Little rogue! I suspect she is hiding from you."

"Polly! Polly!" call both mamma and nurse—but no Polly answers.

"Perhaps she has already gone out to play," suggests nurse. "I'll go and see."

But no; Polly is not on the parade with the other children and they have not seen her; neither is she in the house, for Mrs. Cameron and the servants search everywhere.

Poor mamma, not stopping to put on a hat, runs up and down the whole long line of officers' quarters asking if Polly is there.

But after a half-hour's anxious search throughout the entire post, that no one has seen little Polly Cameron that morning soon comes to light.

Mrs. Cameron was nearly distracted, and nurse lost her wits entirely and ran up and down the line wringing her hands and weeping, and looking into the shallow, little irrigating ditches that bordered the parade, and under the wooden benches, where sturdy three-year-old Polly could no more have hidden herself than the big orderly who was on duty in front of the commanding officer's quarters.

Soon the entire garrison, men, women, and children, had joined in the search for the lost child.

The first sergeant of Captain Cameron's company came over to tell Mrs. Cameron that the company had

turned out to look for Polly, with orders not to return till they found her; several other search parties started out at the same time, determining to examine every foot of the prairie for traces of the lost baby.

In the meantime Colonel Harris had telegraphed Captain Cameron at his club in the neighboring city, where he had run up for the day.

"Come back at once. Polly is lost."

This message reached the poor captain just as he was sitting down to lunch with a party of congenial friends. Throwing the despatch on the table as an explanation to the startled gentlemen, he tore madly down the street to the depot, only to find the noon train just vanishing out of sight, and no other until four o'clock.

Without pausing to take breath, the distracted father rushed to the nearest livery stable, and in five minutes was tearing on horseback down the road to Fort Warren, as if doing his best to overtake the flying train.

Poor Mrs. Cameron, thoroughly overcome with grief and anxiety, was led back in a half-fainting condition to her home, all insisting that she could do nothing to help matters.

Poor little mother! perhaps she could not help by searching out in the hot sun, for every particle of strength seemed to have left her; but there was *one* thing she could do, and so she begged to be left alone.

Then throwing herself in front of her beautiful picture of the Sacred Heart, she poured forth her anguish

and sorrow, beseeching help from Him who never yet has failed to answer a mother's prayer.

Cook and nurse were down on their knees in the kitchen saying, as well as they could between the sobs that nearly choked them, the Rosary, begging the "Mother of all little children" to protect and return the little wanderer—dear little, golden-haired, blue-eyed baby, with her quaint speech and sweet nature. Little Sunshine was her pet name—every one loved and made much of the child.

The old, gray-haired first sergeant, Maloney, had known Polly from the time she was a tiny baby; indeed, he had known her mamma when she was quite a young girl—"long before she jined the regiment," the old man would often say.

He did not go with the rest of his men; but with a dreadful fear clutching at his heart, and tears in his old eyes, that had not known what it meant to weep for so long that they had almost forgotten how, he went directly to the big pond back of the quartermaster stables, where the mules were watered daily The pond was a famous fishing resort for all the garrison children, but they had one and all been forbidden to go there without some older person. However, Maloney went straight there; and when, fresh in the wet sand, he saw the imprint of baby feet, the tears overflowed and ran unchecked and unheeded down his weather-beaten cheeks.

"Merciful God, help me to tell her father!" he

prayed, and retraced his steps slowly and painfully to Captain Cameron's quarters.

Not a soul was in sight as the sergeant came down the line, but away off down the dusty prairie road that led into Mitchel a horseman riding with mad haste could be seen.

"Maybe 'twill be the captain," he thought with the quick insight that love and sympathy often give; "he will have missed the train and is riding back."

So the sergeant waited until the horseman, dusty and dirty, with white, strained face, drew rein.

There was an instant's suspense, then the captain gasped out, "Is she found, Sergeant?"

"No, sir," replied the man slowly; then added, with a wild burst of grief, "O sir! I found the prints of little feet by the big pond, sir."

A piercing shriek interrupted them, and the captain rushed indoors just in time to catch his fainting wife.

Calling to the servants, he rushed upstairs to get the smelling-salts; half-crazed with the thought of the sergeant's terrible suspicions, he hardly knew what he was doing.

He rushed into the bedroom, and there on the floor at the foot of the bed stood the bottle of salts, a powder box, with most of its contents spilled on the carpet, and peeping out from under the bed was a rather shapely little toe. For a second the captain's heart seemed to stop beating, then, with a wild cry

of heartfelt joy, he stooped and from under the bed lifted Polly, awakening her from a sound nap.

Without a word he carried her down and placed her in her mother's arms; then, great, strong man that he was, he broke down and sobbed like a child.

"Mary, Mary, I have brought you back your baby?" he cried.

When Polly found that the whole garrison had been out looking for her, she felt very important; but asked rather scornfully, "Why zey didn't look under ze bed fust."

CAPTAIN DWYER'S EXPERIMENT.

IT was early morning, and yet already the intense heat of the August sun seemed to turn into a sea of molten sand the vast, treeless plain, over which a troop of cavalry was slowly riding. Both horses and men presented a jaded appearance, as if they had ridden far and fast, which in fact they had, being a scouting party sent out from the main command to intercept a small band of Apaches who had gotten away from the agency, intending to join Geronimo in his mountain fastness; they had been hot on the trail of the renegades all night and Lieutenant Dwyer had pushed them to the utmost. The trail had been growing less and less distinct, when, halting his troopers, the young officer slowly swept the horizon with his powerful field-glass. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation, and giving a quick order to his men, spurred his weary horse across the level plain in the direction of what appeared to be a dark blot against the horizon, but which soon resolved itself into half a dozen large "tepees." The smoking embers of the grease-wood fire, the natural fuel of

Arizona, showed that the camp could not have been long deserted.

Ordering a halt, Mr. Dwyer commanded the tepees to be burned. Just then a faint wailing cry from the tent nearest him caught his ear. In a moment he had jumped from his horse and, pushing back the long skin flap which did duty as a door to this savage dwelling, he saw lying on the ground, wrapped in a gorgeous but dirty Mojave blanket, a fine-looking boy papoose about six months old, evidently forgotten by his own people in their hurried departure.

There was no time to deliberate, for already the soldiers had fired the camp, and there was no time to be lost if they desired to catch up with the runaways; so, hastily snatching up the child, Mr. Dwyer, with two or three strips of rawhide, tied the poor baby to the pommel of his saddle, and in a moment more the troop were off in pursuit of the enemy, whose trail, leading directly south, could be seen now very distinctly. But Mr. Dwyer saw plainly that for this time at least the Indians had escaped him.

The foaming sides and labored breathing of the horses showed they could keep up their furious pace no longer; so, when they reached the top of a slight rise of ground, and the field-glass showed no sign of the dusky foe, Mr. Dwyer, with a sigh, gave up the chase and ordered the troop to halt and dismount.

Meantime the little Apache had been screaming at the top of a remarkably powerful pair of lungs, and his

captor was in despair as to what he should do for him. Being a bachelor not long from West Point, he had had no experience with children whatever.

"Poor little chap, it is rather hard lines on you—hush, hush, do!" But this appeal to the small squalling specimen of humanity had no effect; so, turning to his first sergeant, a grizzly old soldier who had plenty of youngsters of his own, Mr. Dwyer asked: "Here, Sergeant Hayes, can't you suggest something to stop this small Apache's howls?"

"I think, sir," replied the sergeant, smiling broadly, "that perhaps the baby is hungry."

"Well, we'll feed him, then," returned the young officer briskly.

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant; "but what will we feed him on? We ain't got nothin' but field rations, bacon and hard tack."

"Oh, well! we cannot have the child starve on our hands. Soften a bit of the hard-tack in water and feed him; and I remember my old black mammy used to give the younger children a piece of bacon fat to chew on, so we can try that."

This rough fare seemed to suit the little stranger remarkably well; and when in the cool of the evening the troop started on its return march, the small Apache seemed to enjoy thoroughly his precarious position on Mr. Dwyer's saddle.

The ladies of Fort Chihuahua were very much amused, on the return of the scouting expedition, to

find that one small Apache baby was the extent of the capture, and many were the teasing remarks and sly jokes Mr. Dwyer had to stand on his *bravery* in actually capturing, *alone* and *unaided*, a *full-sized*, *fierce* Apache —baby.

The first time Father Dyson came to say Mass at the Post Mr. Dwyer had his protégé christened, giving him in full his father's name of John Laurence Dwyer. After a serious and somewhat protracted talk with the good priest, Mr. Dwyer announced that he had decided to take upon himself the care of the child.

When little John was about two years old Mr. Dwyer married, and from that time the child was taken into his benefactor's home and looked upon as one of the family.

And not even when a son and heir and two little golden-haired daughters came, did John lose in the slightest the warm affection of his adopted father and mother.

As for little Dick junior, and Gertrude, and Madge the baby, they simply adored John; for wasn't he the bravest, strongest, dearest brother in all the world?

* * * * * *

Mr., or rather Captain Dwyer, as he was now, for twelve years had passed since that August day when the Apache baby had been rescued and found a happy home, had from the first told John his true history, deeming it best that the boy should learn the truth from those he loved and trusted, than in later years have

it come from strangers' lips; so the story of Captain Dwyer's first campaign was a favorite one, told in the twilight by the nursery fire, and John, with baby Madge on his knees and Gertrude's plump arms around his neck, and Jack squeezing his hand with boyish energy and sympathy, did not allow the bitterness of the past to shadow his happy present life.

There had been plenty of people to shake their heads over "Dwyer's experiment," but the boy had turned out to be such a fine, manly little fellow that even the most doubting agreed that it had been a success.

John attended the post school with the other children of the garrison, and was quick and intelligent beyond his years. His one fault, and a very grave one it was, was his violent temper, which once aroused seemed almost beyond his control.

But as both Father Dyson and Captain Dwyer considered this as a direct inheritance of his savage ancestry they were doubly patient with the boy, who, under their wise and kind forbearance, had gotten his savage temper so far under control that it was the rarest occurrence for him to lose it.

The last time it had happened Father Dyson, to punish and show John the sinfulness of his offence, had not permitted him to serve Mass. This had been a dreadful blow, for from a little fellow the child had shown a most devoted love to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Almost a year had passed since then, and John, though often provoked, with a keen remembrance of the terrible deprivation that would surely await him if he gave vent to his anger, managed to control himself wonderfully.

There was one member of the Dwyer family who had no love for the boy—the old nurse who had been with Mrs. Dwyer since her babyhood; she had never hesitated to show her repugnance to the little interloper as in her mind she always thought of John.

Receiving no encouragement from her mistress in her unreasonable dislike, indeed being reproved for it, she had had to conceal her hatred, and in proportion as she had to suppress it the deadly sin had grown, until now the very sound of the boy's free, careless, happy laugh was an irritation to her.

* * * * * *

John had been conscious all day that it would not take much to make old nurse's smouldering wrath break out at him; if he had spoken to Captain or Mrs. Dwyer they would soon have settled the matter; but, boy-like, he could not bear to tattle, nor did he like to distress them.

About nine o'clock Captain and Mrs. Dwyer had gone over to the assembly room for the usual Friday night hop, leaving John in the sitting-room upstairs that opened off the nursery, they having given him permission to sit up and read for an hour that fascinating

story *The Exiles of Siberia*, that Father Dyson had given him on his last visit.

They had been gone only a few moments when nurse entered the room, holding in her hand a small toy whip of Dick's. "Come, get out of here," she said roughly; "it's time you were abed."

"I have permission to sit up an hour longer, nurse," answered John pleasantly.

"I don't believe it," she said; "an injun would as lief lie as not; anyway I ain't going to sit up for the likes of you any longer."

The hot blood rushed to the boy's cheek; with a great effort at self-control he replied: "It's true, nurse; mother (as he had been taught to call Mrs. Dwyer) gave me permission herself; but if you are tired I will go as soon as I finish this chapter."

"You'll go now," cried the angry woman, seizing him by the arm and pulling him rudely from the chair.

"You'd better leave me alone," cried John hotly; "I'll stand your treatment of me no longer."

"You'd threaten me, would you?" said the woman furiously; "you little devil, *I'll* show you;" then lifting the small whip, she struck the boy viciously full in the face.

In an instant all that long years of patient Christian training had done was swept away; the Indian nature, which resents to the death the insult of a blow, was aroused, and as the furious woman showered the blows upon the half-crazed boy, he seized the heavy brass

lamp and threw it with all his strength straight at the head of his enemy; then, not waiting to see the effect of his deadly missile, he rushed from the house like a wild creature.

The hop-room was a scene of gayety and enjoyment when suddenly the sharp crack of a rifle was heard, and then in an instant the dreaded fire-call was sounded.

The gay scene broke up in the wildest confusion, the officers running to join their respective companies, which had already formed in response to the fire-call, the ladies not stopping for hats or wraps.

Captain Dwyer uttered a cry of horror when he saw it was his own quarters burning, the fire having evidently gained great headway before it was discovered, for the house now was a mass of seething flames.

"My children are in that burning building," cried the unhappy father; and, tearing off his coat, he tried to dash into the house.

But many hands held him back, crying out that it would be certain death for any one to enter; they must wait till the water and ladders came.

As Captain Dwyer struggled to break loose from the detaining hands that held him, a wild-eyed, horror-stricken little figure dashed through the crowd, and, before they could divine his purpose, had darted into the burning building.

The captain, with a hasty movement, wrenched himself free and rushed after John; but as he reached the door a burst of flame drove him back, and just then the

stairs fell with a crash; it was only Indian fleetness and lightness of foot that had carried John up the burning stairway in safety.

With a despairing groan the distracted father fell back, calling loudly for the ladders. Mrs. Dwyer had mercifully lost consciousness during this terrible scene.

A wild shout of delight rent the air, and a hundred eager hands ran up the long fire-ladder to the nursery window, where John appeared with the two little girls in his arms, and Dick clinging to his side. In an instant Captain Dwyer's eager arms were outstretched to receive his darlings; not a moment was to be lost, for already the window-frame was on fire, the flames burning madly as they reached the air; the heavy stream of water was played around the children, but seemed almost to feed instead of check the flames.

Captain Dwyer rapidly passed the little ones down the ladder, and they were soon clasped safely in their mother's arms.

"Come, John; come, my brave son," cried the captain. But, with a sad smile and a mute entreaty for pardon, the boy disappeared. With a cry of horror Captain Dwyer jumped through the window, and presently they both appeared carrying with them the unconscious form of the old nurse.

She was gotten in safety to the ground, and Captain Dwyer, standing on the top rung of the ladder, turned to take John in his arms—for the little hero was so badly burned as to be unable to assist himself—when

with a crash the floor and front of the building gave way, carrying with it the boy who had risked all to atone for his terrible fault. A groan of horror went up, but a dozen brave volunteers rushed into the burning ruins, and poor John, so dreadfully burned as to be hardly recognizable, was laid in the grateful arms of his adopted mother.

The old nurse and the three children had not been even singed, but had been stupefied by the smoke; in fact the heavy lamp had stunned the nurse, who remembered nothing until the fresh air revived her.

With many tears and bitter laments she confessed her share in the accident, and during all the long weeks when John was raving in delirium no one waited and tended on him more tenderly than old nurse.

In the very first moments of returning consciousness John would have confessed his sin with bitter self-reproach, but Captain Dwyer, leaning over him gently, said softly: "Never mind now, my son; we know all about it, and all is forgiven."

And Mrs. Dwyer had kissed him fervently, whispering: "O John! we are so proud of our boy; how can I ever repay you for saving my darlings? You must hurry and get well, my dear son; we cannot spare you any longer."

* * * * * *

Several years have passed since that dreadful night, and John is now an ecclesiastic and is even more noted for his sweet, gentle disposition than for his keen and brilliant intellect, which he intends to devote to God's service as a missionary amongst his own people.

PATSY'S PUDDINGS AND PIES.

"AND so they lived happy ever after, and always had puddins and pies for dinner," concluded Maggie, impressively.

"I'm thinking, Maggie, it's only in fairy stories they'd be havin' of them *every* day," remarked Patsy wistfully.

"Not a bit of it, Pat, me man, it's the rich folks as is the fairies these days; money is a deal better than a wishin' ring or a wand; the rich can have puddins three times a day, and pies, too, if they want 'em. And they kin ate 'em, too, without a thought of the poor next door starvin' for the want of bread;" the girl spoke bitterly, and involuntarily her eyes glanced through the open kitchen window at the mansion which reared its stately pile of gray stone so near the Widow O'Brien's little shanty that the two back fences touched; —but just then the baby woke cross and fretful and Maggie, taking the crying little one tenderly in her strong young arms, began pacing the floor and singing softly and soothingly a favorite air, "Mary the Star of the Sea."

In an instant Patsy had joined in with such a sweet clear voice, wonderfully strong for his age, that the sordid little room seemed quite transformed by the burst of melody that flooded it.

"Singing, my dears? that's right; it's a sweet welcome to me, for I am that tired, I feel as if I could drop."

Both the elder children, and even the baby, with a crow of delight, turned towards the door, where the poor, tired, frail-looking little mother stood smiling gently upon them—but with a sad look on her care-worn face, that made Maggie cry out apprehensively:

"Oh, mother! didn't you get your money?"

"No, darlin', but I'm to have it *sure* to-morrow," replied the poor woman, trying to be cheerful.

"To-morrow, to-morrow," cried Maggie with hot impatience; "in the meantime there's nothing for supper but dry bread and tea."

"No puddins and pies to-night, Patsy," continued the girl with a bitter little laugh—"unless Mrs. Van Corlor should send over her footman, and ask us to take dinner with her to-night."

Patsy's big, beautiful Irish gray eyes opened wider than ever at this delightful suggestion.

"The bootiful lady dat lives back of us?" he exclaimed; "she looks so good and sweet, I'm sure she would if she only knew."

"Sister is only joking, little son," said Mrs. O'Brien, but with a gentle look of reproach at Maggie, that made her color up, and say penitently:

"Yes, it was only a joke, Pat dear; never mind, bread and tea, with love and good will instead of butter and sugar, tastes every bit as good as puddins and pies without it——" and Maggie smiled cheerily, her fit of bad temper quite over and forgotten.

But Maggie's jesting remark had made a deep impression upon Patsy's little mind, and long after the Rosary had been said, the evening hymn sung, and the little fellow tucked away for the night, he kept wondering if Mrs. Van Corlor would not send over the footman and ask them all to dinner if only she knew how very poor they were, how hard both mother and Maggie had to work.

And Patsy fell asleep to dream that the big footman, whose head seemed to be made of plum-pudding, with his eyes of pie, had just given a tremendous knock at their humble door, when he felt Maggie shake him, and heard her say, "Patsy, Patsy! whatever is the matter with you; stop talking in your sleep."

* * * * * *

Mrs. O'Brien had had a hard struggle when her husband had died the year before, leaving her with Maggie, a pretty girl of fourteen; little Pat, a beautiful, dreamy, old-fashioned child of six, who, with his refined face lit up by his beautiful eyes, and framed in a mass of chestnut curls, looked like a little prince in disguise, and last, but not least, the baby, whom they all adored and tried their best to spoil.

Her husband had been one of the oldest sergeants

in the Thirtieth Infantry, and so liked and respected was he by every one, that his family had enjoyed many privileges not given to other married soldiers in the post. Thus Maggie and Patsy had shared the same school advantages of the officer's children, and they were unusually refined in manner, though their speech smacked of their mother's pretty brogue.

When Sergeant O'Brien died, the family had moved to San Francisco, and with the small pension they got from the Government, and the washing Mrs. O'Brien got, they managed to eke out an existence; it was very hard work, for none of them were used to city ways.

Poor little Patsy missed the freedom of garrison life particularly; he would run blocks at the sound of a band, thinking it might possibly be his beloved soldiers.

He insisted upon calling the liveried coachman and footman of their grand though near neighbors, Judge and Mrs. Van Corlor, "orderlies," and always gravely saluted the gorgeous equipage as it dashed up to the stately mansion, though not once did any one notice him.

* * * * * *

As Mrs. Van Corlor, disgusted and bored with everything and everybody, perhaps most of all with herself, drove up to her door, she spied sitting on the stone carriage steps a quaint little figure in a pair of old brown overalls, much too big for him, with an old straw hat battered out of shape, perched above one of the most beautiful child's faces she had ever seen.

"Come you, get out here," called the footman as he jumped out of the box and opened the carriage door in his most polite manner. "Quick now, git a move on ye," he added roughly.

"I won't," replied Patsy stoutly, fixing his big calm eyes on the man's angry face.

"Who is it, James?" asked Mrs. Van Corlor languidly.

"Only a little beggar, mum."

"I'm not, I'm not," cried the child hotly. "I dest cum to ask the bootiful lady somefin.'"

Perhaps the sincere childish compliment flattered the great lady, perhaps the beautiful little face with the big pathetic eyes appealed to Mrs. Van Corlor's carefully hidden heart—but whatever it was, she smiled graciously at Patsy and said:

"What is it, child, what do you want to ask me?"

Then a sudden thought seemed to strike her, she said: "It is too warm to stand here in this hot sun; come inside, child. I shall not want the carriage again to-day, James, turning to the footman, who could hardly believe his eyes at the sight before him—the haughty Mrs. Van Corlor, mounting her front steps, hand in hand with a beggar brat.

Mrs. Van Corlor was a little surprised herself, but with Patsy's beautiful and admiring eyes fixed upon her, she could not refuse the little brown dirty hand that slipped so confidingly in hers.

The butler who opened the door, the maid who came

to take her mistress' wraps, stared with unconcealed amazement at the ragged little stranger.

But Mrs. Van Corlor treated her strange little visitor as if his presence was quite a matter of course.

So when they were cozily seated in the cool darkened morning-room she asked:

"And now tell me, what is your name, child?"

"Patrick Connor O'Brien, but mother and Maggie call me Patsy."

"Then so will I," said Mrs. Van Corlor, "what did you want to ask me, Patsy?"

"If you has puddins and pies every day?" answered the child gravely. "Maggie said you did."

Mrs. Van Corlor's sweet, gay laugh which followed this extraordinary question, penetrated to the dining-room, where the old gray-headed butler was laying the cloth for dinner. He smiled as he heard it and muttered softly, "It do sound good to hear her laugh. I ain't heared her laugh like that since little Harry died."

"Oh! Maggie said so, did she?" questioned Mrs. Van Corlor much interested.

"Yes, an' she said 'praps you'd ask us to have some, too, if you only knew that we had noffin' but dry bread and tea; mother said Maggie was dest jokin', but I fought I'd ask," said Patsy eagerly.

"Well, Patsy, we do not have pies and puddings every day, still I am very fond of them, aren't you?"

"I dest loves 'em," replied the child emphatically.

"Very well, then, you shall stay and take dinner

with me." Then as the butler appeared in response to her touch of the bell, she ordered, "Martin, tell cook to give us a pudding and a pie for dinner, and, Martin, lay an extra plate, I shall have a guest for to-night."

The afternoon passed like a dream to the enchanted child. Mrs. Van Corlor, quite amused, exerted herself to entertain her unexpected guest.

She played to him on the magnificent grand piano, and sang to him; then Patsy sang for her all the hymns he had learned from the good Sister when he went to school, and the quaint old Irish ditties he had learned from his mother, and neither of them gave one thought to the little household across the way which might be growing anxious at the long absence of the child; Patsy, through sheer forgetfulness; as for Mrs. Van Corlor, if the thought did come to her, she dismissed it at once; the child amused her, he was really very bright and entertaining, and such people never worried about their children; it would be quite time enough to explain Patsy's absence when she sent him home.

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As Mrs. O'Brien reached home that evening, she saw Maggie with the baby in her arms racing up and down the street, crying, and calling "Patsy, Patsy!" For a moment the poor mother's heart stood still; "where was her darling?"

"Oh, mother! can you forgive me?" cried the sobbing girl, "*Patsy's lost.*"

It soon transpired that Patsy had been missing since

noon; Dennis Murphy had seen him going up the street about eleven o'clock, but since then no one had seen the child; the neighborhood had been searched in vain, and one of the men volunteered to go and report the child's loss at the police station.

Maggie with many sobs and tears, explained to her mother that Patsy had asked to play with the Murphy children, but when she went to call him in to dinner, he was nowhere to be seen, and Dennis Murphy declared that Patsy had only played with them a little while and had then gone up the street——"He was very quiet all mornin'," Dennis had said, "and he seemed to be a thinkin' of somefin' awful hard."

Poor Mrs. O'Brien, this was a terrible blow; she did not shed a tear, but her face grew white and agonized; she gently tried to hush Maggie's loud self-reproaches, and bowing her head in the baby's golden curls she murmured a brief prayer for resignation and guidance.

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When Mr. Van Corlor let himself quietly in with his latch-key, hurrying a little for he knew he was late for dinner, he paused quite overcome with astonishment at the unusual sounds issuing from the dining-room; first his wife's sweet gay laugh rang out, as he had not heard it since their little son's death, then a child's voice eager and excited, exclaimed something.

As Mr. Van Corlor pushed aside the heavy portières that hung over the dining-room door, his wife saw him.

"Oh! John, is it you? Patsy was so hungry, we really couldn't wait for you," she said calmly.

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Van Corlor, a little blankly, then smiling he went on, "if you and Patsy will excuse me for a moment while I make a hasty toilet, I will join you."

In a few words Mrs. Van Corlor explained the child's presence at the table, and her husband was quite as amused as she was at the quaint little fellow.

Patsy had just finished his first help of pudding, and was debating between another help of that, or a piece of delicious pie, when Mr. Van Corlor remarked:

"There is great excitement in the neighborhood; a child from one of those cottages in our rear is lost; indeed, as I came by, the men, under the direction of the police, were dragging that stagnant pond in those vacant fields opposite. The mother of the lost child was perfectly quiet in her despairing grief, but the sister's cries were simply heartrending. I stopped to see if I could be of use; that accounts for my delay."

Patsy's eyes had been growing bigger and bigger at every word, and as Mr. Van Corlor finished, he burst out into a loud wail:

"Oh, oh! it's *me* that's lost! Oh! I want mother and Maggie."

Just at that instant there was a loud peal at the front door, an excited voice was heard asking something, and Maggie, her eyes red and swollen from long weeping, her voice weak with emotion, burst into the

handsome orderly dining-room like a small cyclone—— "Oh, Patsy, Patsy! is it you?" she cried wildly, "Oh, mother, I've found him!" then thoroughly overcome, poor Maggie fell in a dead faint, right at the feet of the elegant Mrs. Van Corlor.

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From that day a new and happy life opened to the widow and her children. The Van Corlors, both husband and wife, became greatly interested in Patsy; they would have been glad to have adopted the child, but as Mrs. O'Brien would not consent to this, they undertook his education, and he soon came to be looked upon as a son of the house.

A pleasant and remunerative occupation was found for Mrs. O'Brien; Maggie was sent as a boarder to a convent, and the gift of a pretty little cottage just across the way from the Van Corlor mansion, was one of the first things Mr. Van Corlor insisted upon.

If they could not legally adopt little Pat, they would do all they could for him; and being rich and childless, there was nothing to interfere.

Pat grew up to be the pride and joy of both the little cottage across the way, and the stately mansion where his adopted parents lived.

With the ardent affection of his strong and loving young heart, the little child had repaid his benefactors for their generous kindness to him.

But he never lost his ardent love for the army, so when he was old enough, his adopted father, Judge

Van Corlor, procured for the lad an appointment to West Point. The joy and pride of the two mothers in their young cadet when he came home on his second-class furlough, was pleasant to witness.

And when two years later young Cadet O'Brien graduated at the head of his class, the entire family went east to do honor to the great occasion. General Sherman made the speech to the graduates that year, and although he did not know it, his most enthusiastic listener was a dear little, white-haired, rosy-cheeked woman, who sat on a very front seat, and who kept saying excitedly but incoherently:

"To think of the GINERAL, God bless him! And Patsy, too, MY little Patsy, it's just all too wonderful, entoirly."

Judging from the looks of fond pride and love cast upon the blushing young graduate by his mother and sister, and his adopted parents, no one could doubt but that little Patsy's search for "Puddings and Pies" had resulted in real happiness for all concerned.

THE LITTLE BROWN BAG.

"ORDERLY, my compliments to the quartermaster, and say to him that Major Brand will leave to-morrow at six sharp."

"Yes; sir," replies the trim young soldier with a quick salute, then hurries off to do the colonel's bidding.

"So, father, we get off at six, do we?" says Jack, Colonel Wilson's son, who has overheard his father's directions. "Well, then, I must hurry up Jerry and see if our field outfit is in trim."

"You have your mother's consent, then, to this expedition?" replied his father. "I'm glad to hear it. I fancy you may get some fair chicken shooting. I've told Jerry to take my mess chest. The old fellow will fix you up comfortably.

"And see here, Jack, don't mention the amount the Major carries with him this time; twenty thousand dollars would be a big temptation to many a needy devil. Never, since I have been in command here, has it been necessary for the paymaster to carry so much money; but I believe the major pays the 12th Cavalry

at Fort Borrowe en route to Texas. That shabby old brown bag that the Major never lets out of his sight holds a small fortune; so be a bit careful, my boy."

"Yes, father," answers Jack, but he thinks to himself that it would take a good many stage robbers to hold up the escort that is to ride to Fort Borrowe with Major Brand. Ten cavalry men, crack shots all of them, he considers equal to fifty desperadoes.

Jack Wilson was a fine manly fellow of seventeen, an only child, yet thoroughly unspoiled; bold and fearless in the saddle, he was a magnificent rider, a good shot, and in fact was a good all-round athlete, as well as an excellent scholar.

"A thorough army boy, Jack is," the colonel was wont to say; "he was born in a tent, and his first and only cradle was a champagne basket, hastily emptied by the 'Bachelor's Mess' in honor of the occasion."

Jack had been studying hard all summer, for in September he was to enter West Point, where he hoped to become, in due time, as good a soldier as his father.

Colonel Wilson had been anxious to have him go with Major Brand on his pay trip to Fort Borrowe, and back, thinking the trip would do him good, but Mrs. Wilson, mother-like, had been a little unwilling; it was a rough country, the stage had been held up twice, the cattlemen had complained of horse stealing, and threats of lynching were freely made if only the wrong doers were caught, but so far they had defied detection.

Mrs. Wilson had finally consented, trying to laugh at her own fears, and unwilling to spoil Jack's pleasure. After leaving his father, Jack darted off to the stables to see to his horse.

"Kitty," was the pride ot his heart, a beautiful little bay mare, his mother's last birthday gift; he had named her after his best friend, pretty Kitty Post, who had been his chum and comrade, ever since they were wee tots stationed down in Texas. As he marched down the line in front of the officers' quarters, whistling cheerfully, but slightly out of tune, "The girl I left behind me," a gay young voice called out from behind the vines that shaded Captain Post's quarters——

"Where are you off to, Jack? From that suggestive tune you are *trying* to whistle, I fear I am to be left behind, I know you allude to *me*, for even though I am not 'the *pretty* girl,' yet I am the girl of the post, the sole and only one."

"Certainly I mean you, Kitty," says Master Jack, then he adds slyly, "of course I may kiss the pretty little girl, the girl I leave behind me."

"Jack you are getting very saucy," cries the young girl blushing; "West Point is just what you need."

"Well, you won't have me much longer to tease you, Kitty, so don't be cross; I am going up to Fort Borrowe with Major Brand; we leave to-morrow morning, too early for you to get up to see us off."

"Oh, what fun; I wish I could go, too!" cries Miss Kitty, "perhaps they will try and rob the paymaster;

you know it's not two months since the valley stage was held up. And have you heard the news to day, about old Nancy the miser, who lives, you know, about ten miles out on the Fort Borrowe road?"

"No, what is it?" cries Jack, very much interested.

"Well, you know papa was 'officer of the day' yesterday, and this morning at 'Reveille' the sergeant of the guard reported that a cowboy had just ridden in with the news of an outrageous attack upon the old woman; papa interviewed him, and the man said that old Nancy had been found nearly dead, tied to a tree, and gagged; her story was that a gang of men, armed and masked, had ridden up to her at midnight, demanding her money; she refused, telling them she had nothing, when furious with her obstinacy, they tied her up, then searched the hut for the hidden treasure, but finding nothing, in a rage, they set fire to the house, and left the poor old thing tied up that way. She was not found until late the next day, and was nearly dead with the fright and exposure. Papa has gone down to the adjutant's office now, to report the facts to your father. The men say they think it must be the work of 'Mother Mag's gang' as they call them. At any rate all of these outrages have been done by a large party of men. You remember the stage-driver declared there must have been twenty men in the party that attacked him; and it is rumored that they have a meeting-place over in the sand hills at old Mag's store."

"If mother hears all this, she will never let me go," Jack said disappointedly. "Don't you tell her, Kitty; if my father hears it all, and decides that I may go, it would only worry poor mother; not that I believe one half of it, or think there is the slightest danger for us."

"I will do as you say, Jack, but I wish you were not going. I know you will say I am foolish but—— 'I have a quare feeling in me bones,' as old Jerry says when he prophesies trouble."

"I say you are a little goose," returns Jack lightly, and you think nothing of exposing poor Major Brand to this danger; it is a glorious day, too lovely to be wasted; run, put on your habit, and let us go for a ride."

* * * * * *

It was a pretty sight that met Kitty's eyes early the next morning, for, Master Jack to the contrary, she was up in good time to see the paymaster's party set off on their journey.

The big yellow ambulance or "Dougherty wagon" is drawn up in front of Col. Wilson's quarters, and the driver had quite work enough to do to hold in his six mules which are impatient to be off.

Just across the parade, in front of troop "K's" quarters, the escort is ready; it consists of ten smart young cavalrymen under a sergeant, all in fatigue uniforms, which gave them a look as if they meant business.

Jack, on Kitty, is careering around wildly, impatient to be off.

Just as the morning gun sounds, and the buglers commenced the first notes of reveille, Major Brand, followed by Col. and Mrs. Wilson, comes quickly out, with his precious bag in his hands; in another moment they are off, with Miss Kitty waving an excited farewell to Jack, and the Colonel calling out, "Good-by, a pleasant trip to you."

* * * * * *

They have traveled steadily all day with a two-hours' halt, to rest the men and horses at noon; and towards evening reached their first camp at "The Water Holes," a series of springs which form the source of "Wild Horse Creek."

"Within half an hour the camp is pitched, two big "Sibley" or conical tents, modeled from an Indian "tepee," for the escort, and back of them the picket line for the horses.

Major Brand has his tent, a big wall one, for Jack and himself, put up about three hundred yards further down the creek in a big clump of cotton-woods which throw a grateful shade.

The tired horses have been watered and groomed, amongst them Kitty; the cook is busy over his big camp kettles, the welcome odor of boiling coffee floats through the still air. Jerry, Col. Wilson's "striker," is putting up the small camp mess-table and setting forth the tempting supper that Mr.

Wilson has thoughtfully provided for Major Brand and Jack.

And when, a few moments later, Jack and the Major having made serious inroads on their supply of good things, Jack exclaims with a sigh of thorough contentment: "Isn't this jolly, Major?" The Major answered with a hearty "yes."

"By the way, Major," says Jack, "where is your clerk? This is the first time you have paid off without him; it must be very inconvenient for you, and give you lots of work, too."

"It is very inconvenient," replies Major Brand, "but at the last moment Mr. Dixon was delayed by serious illness in his family. I don't like having the sole charge of all this money; it is a big nuisance, and I shall be more than glad to pay it all out safely."

"I tell you, Jack, this rusty little brown bag holds about all that is worth living for, to me, my commission and my honor."

"Don't you think our tent is rather far off from the mess?" Jack says, a little impressed by Major Brand's seriousness.

"No, my boy, for the sentry's post extends from the cook's tent to our own. I gave the sergeant on guard to-night the order myself. I cannot sleep any too well in camp as it is, but if we were any nearer the picket line I shouldn't get half a night's sleep."

"Of course I didn't mean there was any real danger Major, but my mind has been full of these recent

robberies. I fancy father told you of the reports brought in to the post; he didn't want mother to know for fear she would not let me go."

"Yes, I heard all about it," says the Major, "and old Jerry here has been telling me fearful tales about the doings of this 'Mother Mag's gang.' And now, Jack, if you have finished, call Jerry to clear away the remains. I shall smoke a pipe; I always use a pipe in the field, a cigar somehow never seems satisfying; and then we'll turn in pretty soon. I confess I am tired."

"So am I," admits Jack; then he calls: "Jerry! Jerry!" but there is no answer.

"Perhaps he is getting his own supper," suggests the Major.

"He is as deaf as a post," Jack replies, "though you can never get him to acknowledge it, but perhaps I can make him see me if he can't hear."

About fifty yards further down the creek stands a huge old stump, whose few remaining branches, covered with creeping vines, gives it a weird appearance in the semi-twilight.

"There's a capital signal station," says Jack, laughing, then with a quick run and jump he lands lightly on the top of the stump; but only for an instant does he remain so, then crushes through the rotten wood and disappears from view.

"Bless me," laughs Major Brand, "I had no idea it was hollow; it looked stout enough."

Then as Jack emerges breathless and dirty, he continues: "It was easier getting in than out, wasn't it, Jack?"

"Never mind, here comes the sentry; I will send for Jerry by him. Here, sentry," he calls to the approaching soldier, "when you get back to camp, tell McGuire I want him at once."

"Very good, sir," says the man, and soon Jerry appears, and quickly enough under his accustomed hands the tent is made ready for the night, the two field-cots are put up, the candles lighted, a few fresh sticks thrown on the fire, then Jerry, with a respectful good-night, vanishes.

"I think I must have another pipe, Jack, so while I am smoking it tell me something of this Mother Mag. I suppose these stories are all pure romance?"

"Well," says Jack, slowly, "I'm not so sure of that, she really is a horrible looking old woman; she looks quite capable of all the crimes imputed to her.

"She used to come into the post to get her stock of groceries and whiskey from the post-trader, but the last time she came in she got very drunk, and nearly frightened the life out of my mother who was out walking, when this old creature came hobbling after her, begging. Mother, of course, would not give her anything, so old Mag took after her with a big stick which she carries, and chased mother till within sight of the garrison, uttering threats and swearing horribly the whole time. The officer of the day happened to

see it, and at once sent the guard and had her put off the 'Reservation.'

"My father forbade the trader selling her any more whiskey."

"Quite right, too," says the Major, indignantly, "It is whiskey that causes the most of the wickedness in this world."

"Well," continues Jack, "she has never been near the post since, but we hear of her from time to time."

"If she will allow us to reach Fort Borrowe safely, Jack, I shan't mind paying her a visit on our return," says the Major in jest; "do you know where she lives?"

"Yes," replies Jack, "it is back in the foot hills between here and White Bird Cañon; when Lieutenant Denham was out, last fall, with a hunting-party, one day they stumbled upon an old tumble-down, dilapidated building, half log, and half 'dugout;" they knocked and pounded on the doors, but no one answered, when just as they were riding off, the door was opened a little, and they saw the hideous face of old Mag peering at them."

"Well, Jack, that is a fine story for a camp fire, but I think we had better turn in, they sounded taps half an hour ago."

Another five minutes sees them snugly rolled up in their warm field blankets; the major with his little bag for a bedfellow, and with a drowsy good night they are soon asleep.

All is silent in the little camp, not a sound is to be heard save the measured tramp of the sentry walking his lonely post, and the occasional neighing of a restless horse.

* * * * * *

Just what it is that awakens the major he does not know, but he has a vague impression of a shout or scream, and obeying a sudden impulse, he steps to the door of his tent, and looks out; all is quiet; he listens a moment to hear the tread of the sentinel, but not even that sound meets his expectant ear. "Perhaps the man is at the other end of his beat," thinks the major, so he waits, giving the man ample time to reach him, but still no sentry; then, like a flash something tells him that all is not right; in an instant he is by Jack's side:

"Jack!" he cries, shaking the sleeping boy. "Jack!"

"Yes, sir," says Jack starting up, "what's the matter, Major?"

"The sentry has left his post, or else gone to sleep.

"I won't be gone a moment, but look after my bag, Jack. I must see to this."

"Yes, sir, replies Jack, sleepily. And then he dreams, such a curious dream too, he is standing in front of the old rotten stump which slowly changes into old Mag's hideous features, and she commences to shake her stick at him, and then—yes! yes! she certainly is screaming hoarsely at him, "Jack! Jack!" and with a start Jack sprang to his feet to hear the

sounds of wild shouting, firing, and then above all the din and wild confusion, he hears Major Brand call:

"Jack! Jack! I am shot! Save the money if you can. Catch Kitty and ride for your life!"

A strange sight meets Jack's startled eyes; the little camp is a scene of the wildest confusion. The picket line has been cut and the horses are rushing wildly over the plains, maddened with fright.

A band of ten or fifteen horsemen, with rifles ready for use, are drawn up around the little camp.

This is all that the faint starlight has shown Jack in his moment's pause at the open tent-fly.

In an instant his shrill whistle rings out, and his little mare pauses on hearing that well-loved signal; for Jack has trained her to come to him at the sound of his voice or whistle. But only for a second does she stop; then the wild rush of the frightened horses carries her with them.

The desperadoes had not counted upon Major Brand having a companion; they knew that his clerk was not with him and had planned accordingly. But on hearing the major's cry, they saw that someone was with him and at the quick command of their leader, five of the party started towards the major's tent.

Breathing a prayer to our Blessed Mother for help, Jack caught up the little bag and started off like a flash down the creek in the direction the stampeded horses had taken, hoping blindly that perhaps he would make

Kitty hear his whistle and obey it; then, once on her back, he felt he was a match for any pony in the country, for Kitty was well known as the fastest horse around.

Of course, the moment Jack emerged from the shadow of the tent he was seen and a rough voice shouted to him to halt.

He paid no attention to this command save to increase his pace slightly. With his shoulders well forward, his head slightly lowered, his mouth close shut, and arms well in at his side Jack was running a race for a far more important prize than the handsome silver cup recently won at College.

"Halt! or we'll fire," called a rough voice with an oath.

Jack was just abreast of the old stump, running easily and with every breath determining not to give up, when suddenly his foot caught on one of the partially exposed roots of the old stump; he was thrown violently against it, and involuntarily threw out his arms to break his fall; when with a thud, so loud that Jack was sure his pursuers must hear it, the bag fell from his loosened grip, safely down in the middle of the hollow tree.

The money safe in this queer hiding-place, like an inspiration came the thought to Jack, "If I can only fool them a little and make them think I still have the money, I shan't care if they do catch me then."

So with a quick jump he recovered himself, and was off again like a deer.

The trail made a sudden bend to the right there; on one side were the precipitous sides of the cañon, on the other a thick growth of underbush. For a precious five seconds Jack was out of sight of his would-be captors, long enough for him to find a good hiding-place for the treasure among the masses of broken rock if he had needed to do so.

Jack still ran on, but slower, as if exhausted; in a moment the outlaws had closed in on him, calling on him to throw up his hands and halt, for "though he was only a kid," as one of the men remarked he is "a blamed plucky one, and it's best to be on the safe side."

"Where is the money?" demanded the foremost of the men, grasping Jack's arm fiercely.

"I will not tell you," replied Jack quietly.

"Come now, no nonsense, you've dropped that money somewhere here, and the quicker you produce it the better for you; you're a cool un, but Cap, he kin match you in that any day."

"I will not give it to you," says Jack again.

"Supposing I give you a taste of this," said the man pointing to his revolver.

"If you kill me it won't do you any good, for then you never will find it."

"With an oath the man calls to his followers:

"Here, men, you look around sharp and see if you can't find the swag amongst them rocks; we ain't got no time to waste, and we'll settle with this young chap

later on. Here, Bill, gag him and tie up his arms, and let him ride with you."

Grumbling and swearing, yet the men quickly obey his commands, but with no success in finding the money.

At this moment three quick reports are heard and the leader calls out:

"The danger signal, boys; fall in; forward march," he commands with military brevity. And the little party dash up the divide in a quick run, with poor Jack bound and utterly helpless riding double with his captor, Bill.

In silence they ride for nearly an hour, when they reach a road that branches off abruptly to the right; and there, waiting for them, are fully twenty horsemen, evidently the rest of the gang.

The leader of Jack's small party rides up to the one whom they call Cap, and makes his report.

The captain's face grows dark and threatening as he learns of their ill success, and with a gesture of furious anger he turns to Jack.

"Tell me what you have done with that money," he demands fiercely. "This is no child's play, young man."

Poor Jack's heart is beating like a trip-hammer, still he answers as firmly as ever:

"I *will* not tell."

The captain seems to make a quick decision, for turning to his men he gives a few unintelligible com-

mands, whereupon the whole party leave the beaten track, and strike apparently blindly across the prairie.

"Bill," says the leader, "I make you responsible for this young man; if he gets away you'll pay the penalty."

"All right, Cap," says Bill, "I guess I kin manage him, peart as he is."

"What's your name, kid?" he continues, but as Jack makes no answer, he remembers that with his mouth stopped up with a big red bandanna it would be difficult for poor Jack to reply, so he relapses into silence and in this way they ride, hour after hour—the horizon turns from dull gray to pale pink, then flushes rosy red, as the summer sun comes slowly up over the not distant foot hills.

The prairie breeze, sweet and fresh, with a faint smell of the sea blows softly against their faces. It is hard for Jack to realize the real gravity of the situation; the exciting scenes he has just passed through seem like a dream.

And now they strike what seems a much traveled trail, which leads straight to one of the nearest hills, and Jack sees built against the side of it a long low rambling building, part fort, and part dugout, and instantly there flashes through his mind Mr. Denham's description of old "Mag's" den. He is right in his surmise, for as they draw rein, a villainous face appears at the door, and a voice croaks out hoarsely:

"Is that you, boys? welcome home, my dears,

there's plenty to eat and drink; but what's that you've got?" she asks suspiciously, seeing Jack.

"It's all 'O. K.', Mag," says Cap shortly, "get us our feed quick, we're dead tired, then we'll decide what to do with the kid."

The room into which the men enter is almost bare of furniture and filthy beyond description, but is evidently the home of the entire party, thinks Jack, for quickly divesting themselves of hats and coats, they are soon engaged in eating and drinking.

As soon as the rude repast is finished, the leader calls old Mag to one side, and tells her of the partial failure of their plans.

The old hag's face grows even more hideous with rage, as she hear's of Jack's success in defeating the outlaw's raid.

Shaking her stick furiously at Jack, she shrieks out:

"What a little beauty he is! what a brave little man; but leave him to me, old Mag will soon coax him to tell. I'll be so gentle with him, so sweet to him."

Jack, faint and tired leans wearily against the sod walls, while Bill pulls out the gag and roughly cuts the rope that binds his stiff and aching arms.

"Who are you, and what is your name?" says the Captain.

"I am Jack Wilson, son of Colonel Wilson, in command of Fort Sedgewick."

"Oh, ho!" says the old hag, whose rage seems to increase, "And 'twas your fine lady mother as had me

turned out of the post like a dog; it's old Mag's turn now; leave him to me, my b'ys, I'll make him tell, or I'll leave him to starve and die."

As the woman ends her tirade, she pulls out a big iron ring hanging against the sod wall, and with the aid of two or three of the men, half the wall spins out, a rush of cold damp air fills the room; old Mag grasping Jack fiercely, thrusts him into the cave, and quickly closes the door.

The air is suffocating, and filled with evil odors; and with a prayer for help, poor Jack falls to the ground, mercifully unconscious.

How long he lies in this stupor he has no means of knowing, but he is finally aroused by the sound of old Mag's voice.

"Have you had enough yet, you young devil?" she cried angrily, "will you come out now and tell us where you've hid the money?"

"No," cries Jack, with fierce energy.

Uttering vindictive oaths the woman places a loaf of bread and some water on the floor and again shuts Jack in. He devours the bread hungrily, and the water seems like nectar to his parched throat; with the food comes a renewed determination to hold out until help arrives, for well Jack knows that the news of the attempted robbery and his own daring capture will soon reach the garrison, and then he has no doubt as to the result.

Kneeling down, the boy prays fervently and confidently for help.

Slowly the hours pass, and Jack thinks it must be night, for he sees the gleam of the lamp light as the old woman once more opens his door.

"Will you give in yet,' she cries, "I could kill you," she says furiously, and a murderous look gleams in her wicked eyes which, mercifully, Jack cannot see.

"Never," says Jack faintly, but firmly.

"I'll starve you out yet," she says, "sleep well, my pretty." Jack cannot sleep, for huge rats chase around the foul den; the air gets so close he feels in a half-fainting condition; and so the slow hours pass, his brain is dazed; he cannot even pray except "Oh, Jesus, save me! Mother, pray for me!"

How long the time is, Jack does not know, but he is roused by hearing the door creak; when suddenly in the distance he hears loud shouts, then in another moment violent blows on the door of the hut, a sound of rapid firing, a wild confusion and din on the inside of the thieves' abode.

With a wild cry for help, Jack with supernatural strength dashes past the old woman who tries vainly to close the door of his hiding-place, just as the door of the hut gave way; and he sees Lieut. Denham's face peering eagerly into the room, while back of him are the gleaming rifles of half a hundred stalwart cavalrymen.

As Jack rushes into the room, the leader of the gang, aiming his pistol at the boy, fires, crying out:

"He knows too much to leave here alive."

As Jack falls fainting to the floor, he sees dimly and just for an instant, a struggling mass of men; and he hears his fathcr's voice, as if from a great distance, calling tenderly:

"Jack, my son, my dear boy!" and then—he feels he is safe, and floats away in utter unconsciousness.

When Jack recovers he finds himself in the Red Cross Ambulance, which is only used for the sick and wounded; and his father and Dr. Terril, the post surgeon, are bending over him anxiously.

"What is the matter?" he asks faintly.

"Oh, yes, I remember it all. Tell the major, I dropped the money in the old rotten stump, he knows——" gasped poor Jack, and he shudders.

"All right, my son, don't worry over the money," replies his father, but he thinks Jack is still delirious. But Major Brand knows better, he sends Lieutenant Denham to bring in the treasure, which is none the worse for its stay in its queer hiding-place.

"And you mustn't talk," says the doctor, "or we shall be having you in a high fever. I suspect it will come anyway," he adds.

And the doctor is right.

For weeks Jack lays at death's door; in his delirium haunted always by the hideous face of old Mag, and calling wildly that he will never tell where he has hidden the money.

But finally, when the danger is over, Jack awakes;

to find himself famous—nothing is talked of but his heroic conduct; his wonderful escape.

As soon as he is strong enough, Jack hears that his faithful little horse, Kitty, had first given the alarm by galloping into the post, riderless and saddleless, and utterly spent with her mad run.

How his father, taking alarm, sent out a small party to find out the meaning of it; how they had met the major and his band of dismounted cavalrymen, returning; Major Brand in a litter with a bad flesh wound in his leg.

He hears how two large rescuing parties had been sent out to scour the country, his father accompanying Lieut. Denham, who had at once suggested old Mag's hut as being a most likely place for a thieves' rendezvous.

He hears of the desperate fight between his rescuers and the desperadoes, who, finding themselves surrounded, had fought madly for a few moments; their leader, known to Jack simply as "Cap," receiving a fatal wound. The others, with old Mag herself, overpowered, had been sent under a strong guard to the State prison to await their trials, for attempting murder and highway robbery.

And amongst the gang was the faithless sentry; a deserter from some other regiment, and in league with the thieves, without whose assistance they never could have surprised Major Brand's little camp as they did.

In return Jack tells them of the curious hiding-place he had accidentally found for the money.

And he is made very proud and happy over its sure return to Major Brand.

But Jack does not learn until long, long afterwards the full horrors of that murderous den; of whitening bones, and the murdered body of an unfortunate miner.

He finds his slow recovery not so very disagreeable; with a loving mother to attend to every wish; with pretty Miss Kitty to read and amuse the invalid for as long as he deigns to be interested.

Then every day his faithful horse, with her coat shining like satin under Jerry's proud care, is paraded up and down in the front of the big veranda where Jack reclines in state. And Jack calls and whistles to his pretty and faithful friend until her soft eyes glow with excitement, and the dainty ears stand up straight listening to her master's fond praises.

And Major Brand cannot do enough for the boy, who risked his life to save his honor and fortune.

JACK'S SUMMER CAMPAIGN.

FOR a whole day after the order was issued for the gallant Thirtieth Foot to make its usual summer practice march, Mrs. Miller and Jack were known to be planning something quite delightful; even Polly was not in the secret, but did not feel quite so injured when she found papa was not either.

Right after guard mounting, Jack walked down to the colonel's quarters, and rang the bell.

"Is the colonel in?" he inquired of the waitress.

"Yes, Jack," called Mrs. Wood's voice from the dining-room, "come right out here, dear; we are very lazy folks this morning, as you see; won't you sit down and have some waffles?"

"Thank you, I'd like to, but I weally don't believe I tould hold 'em," sighing regretfully.

"Eaten 'quite up to your belt,' eh?" laughed Col. Wood, for Polly's funny idea of restraining her appetite was a regimental joke by this time. Jack flushed up a little, for no little boy enjoys being laughed at, even by a colonel.

"If you'll 'scuse me, Colonel, I'll dest wait till you finish breakfus', for I want to see you on *'ficial* business," Jack concluded very importantly.

"Bless the child," said the Colonel, still very much amused, "we will go into my office, Jack; that's where I transact all my business."

Col. Wood was very fond of the quaint little fellow, and they were often to be seen pacing side by side up and down the shaded path that bordered the big parade ground, discussing the various happenings of the day.

Jack had never been away from an army post until he was quite a big boy, when he had gone on a long visit to grandma, in Washington.

Before his contact with the civil life outside of his army home, his childish mind associated the idea of respectability with the familiar uniform. The only civilians the little fellow had seen had been rather poor specimens—ragged, dirty men, whom nurse called "TRAMPS;" and Jack had been told over and over again that a tramp was always to be avoided, and NEVER spoken to under any circumstances.

To illustrate Jack's childish belief, Col. Wood is never tired of telling this story on the boy.

One day when a large hunting party, eastern friends of the colonel's, made their way to Fort Winston, looking, to be sure, a little rough after their long absence from all civilization, Master Jack was surprised and very indignant, to see his beloved colonel in friendly conversation with these, as he supposed,

tramps; so when the colonel, escorting his friends down the line in front of the officers' quarters, stopped for a moment in front of Captain Miller's to speak to his little friend and introduce him to his guests, Jack drew himself up and said in what was meant to be a whisper, but was quite loud enough to be heard, not only by the entire party, but by his horrified mother, who sat on the front porch reading, "*I* isn't allowed to talk to *tramps*." The shout of laughter that greeted this withering reply, did not do much to appease the little man's indignation, so he added this time without any pretense of whispering: "And I dest think *you'd* ought to be ashamed of yourself, too."

Here Mrs. Miller rushed to the rescue, but the gentlemen were so much amused at Jack's sweeping condemnation that they would not listen to apologies, and before they left the post, they and Jack had become the best of friends, and the child realized that there might be *some* civilians not tramps.

"Now, Jack, what is it? Make your application now," said the Colonel, lighting his cigar and seating himself in a very business-like manner at his desk.

Jack had not seated himself, but stood stiffly at "attention," with his little fingers at the seam of his small knickerbockers.

"Please, sir, I would like permission to go on the practice march."

"Oh, ho!" says the Colonel. "Well, my boy, I've no objections, if your papa has none."

"Oh! but that isn't it at all, Colonel," exclaimed Jack eagerly, in his excitement quite forgetting his soldierly attitude.

"I want your '*ficial* permission, 'cause then you see when I get tired I can ride in the ambulance."

"Let me see; how old are you, Jack?"

"Six, and I'm VERY big for my age," replies the child promptly.

"Very good, then, Mr. Jack Miller, you have my permission to march with my regiment and to use the ambulance whenever the necessities of the case require it. Of course you will march in uniform, and you may report at once to Captain Miller for duty.

"Orderly," says the Colonel, stepping out on the porch, with Jack close at his heels, "give my compliments to Captain Miller, and say to him that I have given this young gentleman permission to accompany the regiment on the practice march."

"Yes, sir," replies the orderly, saluting, then turning with a grin to Jack he says: "Come on, young fellow, I must take you over to the captain's at once; them's the colonel's orders."

And Jack feeling very important at the colonel's strictly official manners, steps out and marches over to the company, trying his best to keep time with Maloney's six-foot stride. After a short interview with his father, Jack rushes to tell his mother of the success of his mission, and to consult with her about his uniform, and is quite satisfied when mamma tells

him that all shall be in readiness this day week, when the command is to march.

* * * * * *

At six o'clock of the eventful day Jack is up, dressed and ready to start, for the troops are to leave at seven, sharp; a very brave and gay little figure he looks, too, in his uniform of mamma's contrivance. His own little dark blue trousers serve quite well, their brevity being quite hidden beneath the regulation yellow duck leggings, manufactured out of an old pair of his papa's.

His coat is cut after the regulation blouse pattern, with brass buttons and all, and when the heat will cause this very military garment to seem a bit uncomfortable, Jack is quite prepared to throw it off, having on a blue flannel field shirt just like the rest of the soldiers wear, and around his throat is knotted a gay red scarf; he wears a uniform cap with a big brass "30," with the crossed rifles and the letter "G," that being Captain Miller's company.

Swung over his shoulder is his haversack and canteen, both numbered and lettered "Co. G, 30," with his own initials beneath, "J. N. M." (John Nicholas Miller).

The early morning sun is shining brightly; the buglers are blowing assembly; the ladies and children are gathered in front of Col. Wood's quarters to wave farewell to the troops; officers are hurrying to their respective companies; and altogether the scene is so lively and fascinating, that Jack gives a little sigh of

contentment and says: "Mamma, I do like being an army boy, it is so excitin'."

The adjutant and the sergeant-major take their places; the band strikes up a lively quickstep; the line is soon formed and the colonel on his big black horse, "Nig," takes command, and presently the command is off on their two-hundred-mile march, with the band playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

As they turn in at the end of the parade ground, and march down the "line," the colonel gives the command "At ease," which means that the men may march and carry their guns as they please; then it is that Jack proudly steps into line, alongside of his father, for a four weeks' walk across the plains.

Jack was a very tired little boy at the end of the first day's march, and each little toe had a big blister on it, and when he knelt down by the side of his own little camp-cot, made especially for him by the company carpenter, to say the one decade of the beads which mamma, Polly, and he were accustomed to recite together every night before he reaches the "Glory be to the Father," he fell fast asleep, and there, a few moments later, Captain Miller found him.

"Poor little chap," he says tenderly, tucking the weary little figure up in his blankets, for the warm evenings grew very chilly on the open prairie, as the night breeze springs up.

And perhaps it is the example of his little son, but at any rate Captain Miller kneels beside his sleeping child.

Jack grows stronger and sturdier every day; he is as brown as an Indian, and scorns the very idea of blistered feet.

One day when they had gone into camp rather earlier than usual, Sergeant Murray proposes that he and Jack go "chicken" shooting; a prairie chicken belongs to the pheasant family, and is just as delicious eating. Taking the company shot gun, they strike across the plains to where the sage brush and grease wood grow quite thickly, for there they will be sure to find some game, says Sergeant Murray.

Sure enough as they approach the very first clump of brush, the sergeant motions Jack to move quietly, and points out the head of a chicken peeping out.

Jack is trembling with excitement, but follows the sergeant's directions very carefully——

"I'll hold the gun, Jack," he whispers; "you aim for his head and when I say THREE! pull the trigger, and you'll have him dead, sure."

Their plan is eminently successful and Jack returns to camp bearing proudly the result of his skill.

It is rather odd that they should have found just this ONE bird and that he should be so obligingly still, too, and that the shot should have been in his *side* and not in the *head.*

But perhaps "G" company's having a regular chicken supper that evening had something to do with Jack's good luck. I think Sergeant Murray could have explained it if he only would, but none of these

doubts disturbed the young hunter, who proudly carried his one fat bird to Colonel Wood's tent and handing it to the orderly, tells him to give it to the Colonel, "with my compliments," he had added, remembering the invariable formula of military courtesy.

Presently Col. Wood comes himself to thank Jack, and beg the pleasure of his company at dinner that evening. Another day they run across a traveling photographer and at the united request of "G" company Jack has his picture taken in his full regimentals, leaning with careless ease on the famous company shot gun. To be sure the picture is rather marred by one hand being tied up in a rag, the result of a too sharp pocket-knife. Out of his bandaged hand rather a funny incident occurred some time after.

Some months later Sergeant Murray having gone on a six months' furlough to the "old country" is visiting an ancient aunt of his; the old lady has heard so many marvels of that wonderful land across the sea, that nothing is too much for her to credit; so when her nephew produces Jack's photograph she exclaims with delight at the "baby soldier."

"Sure, Dennis," she asks, "and how did the poor purty innocent get hurt?"

"Faith! he was WOUNDED IN AN INDIAN FIGHT," replies her wicked nephew unblushingly.

Whereupon Mrs. O'Reilly cries out in mingled consternation and admiration:

"What a country, where even the BABIES fight."

Finally comes the last days' march, and about ten o'clock in the morning they reach the big bustling western town of Columbia, where they are to join the other Infantry regiments of that department, and go into camp for the summer field maneuvers.

A very happy and proud little boy is Jack, as dirty, dusty and very tired, he marches with the regiment down the principal street of the town, past the big hotel where mamma and Polly are waving him an excited welcome, followed and envied by every small boy in the place.

Not even the drum-major, who carries himself with such a very important air, excites half the interest Jack does.

And when they break ranks on reaching their pleasant camping-ground, Jack finds himself the center of an enthusiastic and admiring crowd. It is the Colonel himself who calls Jack and introduces him to the Mayor, "as my youngest subaltern, Mr. Curry, and one of the best walkers in my regiment."

"I am pleased to meet you, Master Jack," responds the great man of the town, "and I hope you will give us the pleasure of your company at the banquet we are giving to the officers to-night."

Capt. Miller thanks the Mayor for his kind invitation, but declines for his little son, as the "banquet" will not begin until after his hour for bed.

Just then Jack hears a dear voice calling, "What have you done with my boy, Col. Wood?" and then he

is clasped in mamma's loving arms, while Polly dances wildly around him, squeezing his hand and talking as fast as her tongue can go.

That night for the first time in several weeks Jack slips on a little white night-shirt, and cuddles up in mamma's lap for a "serus" talk as he calls it.

He pours into her interested ears all the various incidents of his long tramp, and his many adventures, then finishes up with:

"After all, mammy dear, I'm glad to be dest your own little boy once more. It was awful lonesome bein' a soldier sometimes, 'ticularly at night.

"I—I—cried a lettle teenty tinty bit some nights," he admits rather shamefacedly; "but I hided under the bedclothes so papa wouldn't hear me. Anyway I walked just splendid, mamma; I hardly ever rided in the ambulance. I could, you know, 'cause I had the Col's 'ficial permission."

"My blessed baby," replies mamma, hugging him tightly—"I don't wonder you cried a bit. I suppose you wanted mamma and Polly. Papa is very proud of his little son; says you acted like a man the whole time—but come now, darling, Polly is fast asleep and you ought to be too, so shut your eyes and I will sing you to sleep." And so safe in mamma's arms, lulled by the dear voice, Jack is soon off to the land of nod, to travel over again in his dreams his four weeks' march.

HOW MARJORIE RAN AWAY.

MARJORIE was a little army girl; she was born in a frontier army garrison, had spent two years of her life there, when her papa was ordered east on special duty, and they all, papa, mamma, nurse Lizzie, and Marjorie herself, went to grandpapa Burton's for a whole year.

Besides grandmamma Burton and grandpapa, who was every bit as bad about humoring Miss Marjorie's whims and fancies, there was a whole houseful of grown-up young aunts and uncles who did their best to spoil the little maid. Not that they meant to spoil her. O! dear no, but they could not bear to say no, nor see the "dear child" cry, so Miss Marjorie soon discovered that to have her own sweet way, it was only necessary to weep a little and nothing was denied her.

Mr. and Mrs. Irwine could only smile ruefully over this spoiling process of their little daughter, for any attempt at discipline created so much opposition among the grandparents, the aunts, and the uncles that Captain Irwine gave up. Once, after a very naughty piece of mischief, when Marjorie had with a pair of sharp

scissors cut to pieces one of the down pillows which adorned the lounge in the morning-room, Mrs. Irwine determined to punish the child.

Shutting her bed-room door tight so as to drown as much as possible the sounds of woe from the victim, she proceeded to slap with a small ivory brush the mischievous hands.

Hardly had the first slap descended upon the chubby little palms, when grandmamma's voice was heard outside the door, in mingled reproof and indignation.

"Mary, you are surely not *spanking* that dear baby—I would rather lose a dozen cushions than have dear little Marjorie's feelings hurt, and her high spirits crushed."

Marjorie's wails, heart-breaking and loud, redoubled on hearing grandmamma's expressions of opinion.

"Mary, I beg of you as a favor not to punish the child any more; remember your own childhood, Mary, for I never believed in corporal punishment."

Mrs. Irwine did remember her childish days with the discipline of the Burton household, and how childish faults had been rigorously punished, but she only smiled.

But disciplining one's children and one's grandchildren are two very different things, so Mrs. Irwine had found. By this time several of the young aunts had joined Mrs. Burton, and there was quite a procession outside, imploring and demanding the release of the culprit.

"Very well, mother, and girls, I will turn Marjorie over to you, and if she grows up to be a spoiled, horrid child, it won't be my fault," and Mrs. Irwine put on her hat and walked off, leaving the besieging party triumphant, but rather crestfallen, even in the midst of their triumph.

As for Marjorie, after gaining her victory, she was so good for days after, that Mrs. Irwine relented, and thought perhaps she had been too hasty and severe.

About this time, however, Marjorie developed a habit of saying every time she was refused anything, or crossed in anyway:

"Well, I don't care, I don't love *you* and I'se goin' to run away."

The little maid was naturally such a sweet winsome little thing, with the sunniest disposition and face like an angel; a mass of bright golden curls framed the rosy cheeks, and big blue eyes, and the button hole of a mouth seemed just made for kisses, so that for her to scowl and say cross ugly words, seemed very strange to her papa und mamma.

"Something will have to be done, Mary," remarked Capt. Irwine very gravely one evening, as nurse disappeared, carrying Marjorie off to bed, the child screaming out:

"I don't want to go to bed; I *don't* love you and I'se goin' to run away."

"Yes, Jack," assented Mrs. Irwine; then suddenly she exclaimed: "I have it; the next time she threatens

to run away, I will have nurse pack her trunk and give her a little hand bag, take her down to the gate, and tell her to *run* away."

"Good," said the Captain, "and to-morrow is our opportunity. When your father and the boys are safely off to the city, and your mother and the girls have started for the tennis party at the Loverings, we will settle Miss Irwine if I am not much mistaken, once and for all."

* * * * * *

When Mrs. Irwine had heard Marjorie lisp her evening prayers, which always ended with this petition of Marjorie's composition: "Blessed Mother in Heaven, pray that Marjorie may be a better girl," she said impressively: "Now, little daughter, papa and I have decided that the very next time you threaten to run away, you will *have* to go; we don't care to have a little girl stay with us against her will."

This point of view had not struck the young lady before, so it was in a very subdued voice that she answered:

"Oh, mamma, I will not say it any more, I will be a good girl always now."

"I hope so, indeed, my darling," replied mamma, "and now go to sleep. Good-night, and God bless you, sweetheart."

* * * * * *

Grandmamma and all the aunts had just driven off and Marjorie had waved them a smiling good-by, but

when mamma said: "Come now, girlie, it is time for your afternoon nap," Marjorie, forgetting her good resolution of the night before, frowned and remarked fretfully, "I isn't sleepy, I don't want to take a nap."

"Yes, but you must; see, there is nurse now," answered mamma pleasantly.

"I *won't* take a nap," wailed spoiled Marjorie, "I don't love you; I'se goin' to run away."

Fatal words; mamma's indulgent manner changed at once.

"Very well, nurse, Marjorie need not take her nap, she is going to leave us; just go and pack her trunk, and bring down her best hat, her gloves and parasol; it will be very warm going to the train."

* * * * * *

Twenty minutes later, Mrs. Irwine escorted the little girl to the gate, gave her a small satchel, and after remarking that her trunk would be sent down to the depot at once, bade her a polite but cool good-by.

A high thick hedge screened the Burton grounds from the high road, so Mrs. Irwine easily kept pace with the little forlorn figure, obstinately determined upon her own way.

Just then the grocer's man drove along, and Marjorie at once hailed him——

"I wish you would drive me to the train at once, John; grandmamma has the carriage, and it is too warm to walk."

"Bless us, and save us," murmured the astonished man; "my, ain't she jest smart for a baby?"

"Say, Sissy, I guess you've run away, an' I'd better carry you to your ma."

"My name is Marjorie, not Sissy," in dignified displeasure, "and my mamma knows I've runned away; she—she—helped me to;" there was just a suspicion of a sob in these last words, and it was all Mrs. Irwine could do to prevent herself from interfering.

"All right, young lady, just wait till I deliver these goods to your house, and I'll give you a lift," said the man, willing to humor the pretty child, but determined to find out what it all meant.

Mrs. Irwine met him at the gate and soon explained matters, whereupon John chuckled and entered heartily into the plan.

"If you say so, mum, I'll buy her a ticket for Glenwood, it's only an hour's ride, and see her safe aboard the train, and you kin take a seat right behind her. I'll take care as she don't see you a-gettin' aboard the train.

"I think that'll cure the young lady, sure, when she finds herself all alone, and traveling away from home as fast as the cars kin go; you can meet the down train from the city at Glenwood, the one Mr. Burton and the young gentlemen usually come down on."

This plan was carried out successfully, and the afternoon "flyer" carried with it a very determined looking little passenger, who sat bolt upright in her chair in

the parlor car, with her ticket clasped tight in one little hand, and her precious hand-bag in the other.

Matters had been explained to the conductor, so when he reached Marjorie and called "Tickets," he stopped to have a little chat with her.

"Aren't you rather young to be traveling alone, Miss?" he remarked pleasantly.

"I'se over *five*, I isn't a *baby*," replied Miss Marjorie scornfully.

"May I ask how far you are going?"

"Oh, dear, I'se fordotten!" exclaimed the little girl excitedly, "but my ticket says," she added quickly.

"Ah, yes! I see," said the interested conductor. "Do you intend visiting friends? Perhaps you expect your mamma and papa to meet you?"

"No, I don't; I'se, I'se runned away, you see, and they don't want me any more."

"Run away? well! well! I'm sorry to hear that; I can't approve of any such proceeding; you don't look like a naughty child," and with that the kind conductor marched off, looking very stern, and leaving poor Marjorie feeling more friendless than ever.

As the minutes sped away, and the train flew along, carrying the child further away from all her dear ones, a very subdued and frightened expression began to settle down on the poor baby's face, and presently Mrs. Irwine who sat just back of the little one, where she could watch every movement, saw great tears roll

down Marjorie's cheeks, and then a sweet small voice sobbed, "I want my mamma, I don't want to run away."

The sobs kept on increasing in volume as poor Marjorie thought of the desolate fate which awaited her at Glenwood, until catching sight of the conductor at the further end of the car, she jumped from her chair, scattering gloves, parasol, and bag, and ran down the aisle crying wildly, "Stop, stop, oh, please stop, I want my mamma."

"Will you promise me never, never, to run away again, or even to say you will run away," said the big conductor, catching the forlorn little figure in his arms.

"Yes, yes," promised Marjorie, quite breathless with grief and terror. "Oh! I do want my mamma!"

"Very well," said her new friend, "now remember your promise," and instantly she found herself in her mamma's arms, and was soon sobbing out her grief and repentance clasped close to mamma's loving heart.

Grandpapa, grandmamma, uncles and aunts were disposed to be indignant over mamma's "plan for curing the little runaway, and would have petted and comforted the culprit until she would have felt more like a heroine, than a naughty little girl brought back home in disgrace, but that Captain Irwine for once interfered very peremptorily, and sent Miss Marjorie, as meek as a lamb, off to her bed.

And though the family did think the treatment too

heroic, still they had to admit the improvement in the little culprit.

Perhaps the cure had been rather severe, still it had been very thorough.

But that evening Captain Irwine asked confidentially as his wife sat with him on the porch waiting for him to finish his cigar: "Mary, how ever did you hold out so long? I'm sure I couldn't, for I will confess to you that I find it harder to discipline this one child, than my whole company."

"Well, Jack," returned his wife laughingly, "you've always said Marjorie inherited her obstinacy from me, so perhaps it was that trait of mine that enabled me to hold out long enough to conquer our young lady."

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